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HOW TO MANAGE SELF-LEADERSHIP IN REMOTE ENVIRONMENTS

**A qualitative study made on Swedish
medium and large-sized organizations**

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Abstract

Covid-19 affected the world's population when the pandemic became a global problem at the start of 2020. The effects of the pandemic placed demands on various countries and their inhabitants. But also on organizations in sundries sectors. Globally, and specifically on the Swedish labor market, the effects of covid-19 have contributed to increased use of technology to enable continued work, elsewhere than physically on site. This has created opportunities but also challenges for managers to motivate subordinates and get them to work towards the organization's set goals. *Self-leadership* is thus a concept that is important to understand and handle in the current situation, as it can lead to increased motivation and performance of individuals. Previously published research points out how leaders can work to promote self-leadership. e.g. by adapting individuals' characteristics and commitment to the nature of the task. How self-leadership is promoted in the Swedish labor market, under digital conditions in remote work, is however still unclear.

We know, from previously published research, that *self-leadership*, *clear goals*, *motivation*, and *self-efficacy* all have an influence on each other. They further serve as a prerequisite for organizational performance and goal fulfillment. But there is no answer as to how this can be promoted under current digital conditions. Swedish companies are moreover at the forefront when it comes to innovation development and the shift to digital resources, as a result of the pandemic. But there is no explanation for the connection between self-leadership and its new challenges with digital work, nor on the Swedish labor market. The intention of this study is therefore to fill the research gap with a qualitative and empirical study on Swedish medium and large-sized companies, where the effects of covid-19 proved to be extensive. The goal is moreover to answer the question and explain how Swedish medium-sized and large organizations manage self-leadership under presented conditions. This issue includes both leaders and employees, and the study groups have thus both been included in the study to create a holistic understanding of how self-leadership is handled in the above-mentioned contexts.

The results, based on five employees, and four leaders in various sectors and organizations, show that enabling recurring opportunities for social interactions, support and to convey a transparent culture with clear goals is necessary to manage self-leadership in remote environments. Having a thorough opportunity for support in the organization and creating opportunities for social interactions is something that this study has significantly contributed to the research. This is because these phenomena have not previously been presented of any particular importance, nor have they been promoted as necessary for the management of self-leadership in a remote context. In this study, however, it has been shown to be extremely necessary, from the point of view of both managers and employees. This, to enable self-leadership, increase motivation and self-efficacy in the Swedish labor market, which positively can affect individual- and organizational performance and goal fulfillment.

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Concept definitions

Remote work/working digitally/virtual teams: A prerequisite for working remotely is to utilize digital resources. Hence, remote work, virtual teams, and working digitally are used as synonyms in this report.

Self-leadership/self-management: The process of influencing oneself.

Self-efficacy: The belief in one's own capacity to perform specific tasks or behaviors.

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1.Introduction

The introductory chapter describes the effects of covid-19 on the Swedish labor market, followed by challenges resulting from its restrictions. Digital conditions for carrying out work at a distance have become significant, but have also made it complicated to promote self-leadership, a component important for organizational goal fulfillment. The chapter culminates in a problem discussion, presents the research question, purpose of the study as well as unit of analysis.

1.1 Problem background

1.1.1 Self-leadership

How well an individual can control their work and influence their own behavior is called *self-leadership* or *self-management* (Neck & Houghton, 2006, p. 270). To distinguish between leadership and self-leadership, the former involves influencing *others*, while the latter involves influencing *oneself* (Furtner, 2017, p. 5). The concept includes that individuals influence themselves to accomplish goals (Houghton and Neck, 2002, p. 672), and indicates that individuals work without close supervision from leaders (Dubrin, 2015, p. 26).

When individuals have more freedom of their own work, expectations from management increase (Grönlund, 2007, p. 14). Employees are able to structure, plan and be responsible for their work to a higher extent (Grönlund, 2007, p. 22). In Sweden, control and influence over own working assignments however showed that harmful outcomes like stress are not likely to be correlated to employees getting more control and freedom in their work. On the contrary, stress can arise if the employee is not able to regulate the workload or the requirement to deliver results (Grönlund, 2007, p. 22-23). For employees, self-leadership can generate increased job satisfaction (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2019, p. 95), and can be beneficial if goals and values with tasks and results are clearly presented (Bäcklander, 2019, p. 99). Clear goals can create employee focus and help subordinates maintain a high level of concentration and performance (Robbins et.al. 2010, 149). Performance as a result of self-leadership increases with clear goals, and adequate information linked to the task (Bäcklander, 2019, p. 75). For leaders, differences between individuals' engagement and characteristics comprise a major challenge supporting self-management in their subordinates. The cooperation between managers and employees, however, facilitates goal fulfillment, which is essential for the performance of self-management. Conclusively, leaders should promote self-leadership based on the employees' individual competence and commitment (Dubrin, 2015, p. 28).

In the concept of self-leadership, motivation is an important element, which can be described as individuals' focus on intensity and perseverance to achieve specific goals (Robins et al., 2010, p. 140). Motivation includes behavioral and environmental influences as well as personal and internal preferences and processes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020, p. 1). High motivation alleviates employees' well-being (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020, p. 828) and increases *self-efficacy* (Van den Berghe et al., 2014, p. 408). Self-efficacy is described as an individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform specific assignments (Milam et al, 2019, p. 321; Dubrin 2015, p. 316). Merheirkouni (2018, p. 395) explained that self-efficacy and self-leadership have a strong correlation and dynamically affect one another. High motivation can be facilitated by leaders showing engagement, supporting followers, and providing value to work activities (Orsini & Rodrigues, 2020, p. 828). Orsini & Rodrigues (2020, p. 829) further depicts that motivation is highly affected by the working environment, trust, and open communication. As an illustration, engagement, and motivation can decrease among employees when working remotely (Purwato et.al, 2020, p. 6240). Conclusively, as a result of more trust being placed in an individual who works remotely, individuals who work from

home are expected to take more personal responsibility and are thus less controlled. It can therefore be argued that motivation and self-leadership are more complex to promote through remote work, than to employees being presential in their workplace.

1.1.2 Self-leadership in a remote environment

As early as 1999, Judith G Oakley highlighted challenges and opportunities with virtual teams. She believed that virtual teams were considered useful, as they could contribute to fast and efficient collaboration, both within and between organizations. The benefits were highlighted as cost savings and increased efficiency, by using, among other things, video conferencing instead of physical meetings (Oakley, 1999, p. 4). Oakley highlighted a challenge with virtual work as increased expectations of productivity and quality, which creates a requirement for leaders to meet these expectations through improvements in e.g. communication structures and processes (Oakley, 1999, p. 5). In the article, new technologies are mentioned as an alternative for organizations for achieving desired results, such as increased efficiency and collaboration (Oakley, 1999, p. 4). The paradigm of working remotely has resulted in more benefits for organizations today. Such as lower retention (Soruri, 2021, p. 1), geographic flexibility (Choudhury, 2020, p. 655), lower levels of stress (Moretti et al., 2020, p. 1), better family life (Choudhury, 2020, p. 660), and greater autonomy (Moretti et al., 2020, p. 15).

However, remote work can also result in challenges such as problems with decreased motivation among employees (Purwato et.al, 2020, p. 6240). A further complexity with working remotely is the managerial relationship between leader and employee. Subordinates are less controlled, observed, and cannot be steered in the same way, as when working in close connection to leaders and colleagues (Raišiene, 2020, p. 3; Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403). The limited visibility makes it hard for employees to be confirmed for his or her actions and to get reactions or responses from their managers. As a result, it is important that employees are self-assertive and can motivate themselves to perform tasks. Even without extensive support from the management board (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403). Furthermore, Perry et al., (2018, p. 579) explain that autonomy and being independent is an essential mechanism in order to facilitate successful work in a remote environment. Autonomy acts as a synonym for 'freedom', to independently affect one's own work (Ho & Nesbit, 2014, p. 394). The authors explain that autonomy in a remote environment often gives the individual the flexibility to decide *where* to work, but the employees may still be steered and limited to decide *how* to work and to accomplish tasks. However, having low autonomy is explained as a big challenge in remote work and may obstruct empowerment among employees. Rather, higher levels of autonomy are considered crucial in order to facilitate satisfaction and well-being among employees working remotely (Perry et al., 2018, p. 579). In today's situation, remote work, as an effect of covid-19 is increasing. Thus, the employees have higher freedom to choose *where* they work, as employees are advised not to visit the physical offices (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020). Furthermore, *how* the employees should set up their work individually may increase, as remote work places greater control over employees' own work structure (Grönlund, 2007, p. 22). Conclusively, self-leadership becomes essential to manage individual work during remote contexts.

1.1.3 The effects of covid-19 on Swedish businesses

As an effect of covid-19, a radical transition from working in an office to remote has occurred in the working population around the world. Numbers have shown that approximately 81% of the worldwide working population has changed workplace from office to home (Savic, 2020, p. 101). Swedish authorities made the recommendation to work from home as far as possible

(Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020), and as a result of the restrictions, around 1/3 of the Swedish workforce has been working from home at least once a week during the pandemic (SCB, 2020). Hence, covid-19 has placed requirements on companies to rearrange their resource allocation. A digital way of working has thus become more utilized, as a result of restrictions for limited physical encounters (Infrastrukturdepartementet, 2020).

In April 2020, the research company Novus created a survey among 200 Swedish companies, on behalf of the growth company in digitization, Digital strategi. The study examined change toward digital transformations, as effects of covid-19 on large and medium-sized businesses (Digital Strategi, 2020, p. 2). The analysis showed that approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the companies surveyed claimed that the digital transformation had operated well after the start of the pandemic, due to quick adaptation from physical workplaces to digital. 44% of the respondents also stated that they will change their working methods towards digital solutions ahead (Digital Strategi, 2020, p. 3). This is further confirmed by Suresh (2020, p. 12), who explains that the culture of working from home has resulted in over 80% of businesses and sectors adopting a digital method globally. Virtual work is thus less of an organizational choice, and rather critical in today's situation in order to enable adaptation to society's structures. The digital transformation will most likely continue to affect the working environment. As an illustration, the Swedish music technology company, Spotify (2021), has announced that they will continue offering their employees the possibility to work from anywhere in a post-covid-19 situation.

A leading global company in cloud services has further conducted a survey with the aim to answer the question of how organizations adapt their innovation to challenges that followed the pandemic. Over 4000 respondents from medium and large-sized companies from 12 countries were included in the study during 2020. Amongst others, participants from Singapore, UK, Netherlands, USA, Canada, and Sweden were included in the study. The respondents were managers and IT professionals. The results of the study showed that nearly 85% of the interviewed organizations have sped up their transformation towards a more flexible approach to increase the opportunity for remote work (Unit4, 2020). Conclusively, adaptation to the new digital way of working demands reconstruction of strategies and processes (Digital Strategi, 2020, p. 6), which can be challenging for companies. The facts further indicate that Swedish organizations are adapting their way of working as a result of external impacts. As individuals' responsibilities increase with remote work, higher demands are placed on promoting self-leadership in organizational contexts. Thus, there is a relevance to study self-leadership in today's working context, where covid-19 has resulted in enforcement to work remotely.

1.2 Problem discussion

As presented in the introduction, the contingency for self-leadership is affected by factors that appear to be more complex under digital conditions. It has been declared that motivation is a component of self-leadership (Robbins et al, 2010, p. 140). Motivation, in turn, has a tendency of decreasing when working in distance from leaders and colleagues (Purwanto, 2020, p. 6240) . It has also been shown that autonomy is a critical success factor for employees during remote work (Perry et al, 2018, p. 579). Autonomy is further a prerequisite for promoting self-leadership (Ho & Nesbit, 2014, p. 394). Thus, it creates a complexity to understand how leaders work to increase motivation and encourage self-leadership among employees. Also how employees can manage their own self-leadership under less controlled circumstances, in a remote environment. Studying self-leadership and remote work in connection to the effects of the pandemic will be significant. This, since the transformation, a

year after the beginning of the pandemic, does not seem to be a temporary shift. Rather, several companies have declared the opportunity to continue working in a similar manner in the future (Spotify, 2021; Unit4, 2020; Digital strategi, 2020).

Working remotely and with digital tools has constituted challenges for leaders as well as employees, which make them relevant to study. For leaders, creating structures for communication and processes is challenging (Oakley, 1999, p. 5). Moreover, working in a remote environment presupposes that leaders trust the employee's ability to perform tasks independently, which reduces leaders' control (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403). For employees, the major challenge for working in a remote environment is to get confirmed for one's actions and response or reactions from managers (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403). Furthermore, clear goals are a prerequisite for increased self-leadership (Bäcklander, 2019, p. 75), motivation, and performance (Robbins et al, 2010, p. 149). This may create demands on employees to question goals that are unclear or to have a discussion and questions related to goal fulfillment. Something that may become even more of a challenge under digital conditions, as the presumptions for communication are evolving. In turn, a need for self-assertiveness is expressed in order to manage one's own performance (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403). Namely, self-leadership becomes relevant and meaningful in order to increase motivation and performance.

1.3 The relevance of the study

To identify a theoretical research gap, we have accomplished literature research by reading peer-reviewed articles, mainly on the subject of self-leadership, remote work, and the components of self-leadership, motivation, self-efficacy, and goal-theory. The research has been made through platforms such as DIVA, EBSCO, and Emerald journals. We have also used google as a search engine to find support for the topics. Conclusively, this literature research can ensure that our perspective on the subject has not previously been examined. This study thus contributes to new theoretical and practical perspectives in the field of self-leadership interrelated with remote environments.

Neck & Houghton (2006, p. 274) explained that the majority of studies related to self-leadership have been done without empirical evidence. Further, empirical studies are mainly missing in organizational environments. Research on self-leadership has also focused on goal fulfillment at the individual and group levels, but not at the organizational level (Bracht et.al, 2018, p. 1). This study, which will consist of empirical findings, is significant to improve research within the subject of self-leadership, but also self-leadership in relation to the specific mentioned organizational context, which has been presented as deficient. When searching for relevant literature, findings have shown studies on self-leadership in many contexts, but no results in connection to a remote environment have been found. This makes the interrelation between self-leadership and remote work interesting to study. Furthermore, the choice to investigate self-leadership in connection with remote work among various organizations and individuals. This can in turn be strengthened by Müller and Niessen (2017, p. 87), who provide a proposal for future research that includes examining self-leadership in diverse contexts.

Self-leadership has mostly been examined through quantitative research (Talsi, 2017, p. 15). During latter years, researchers have continued to adopt a quantitative approach to studies on self-leadership. As an illustration, authors such as Müller och Niessen (2017); Marques-Quinteiro (2019), and Megheirkouni (2018) have all conducted quantitative studies on the subject. This study will therefore contribute to research on self-leadership with a

qualitative approach. Previously published studies on self-leadership have furthermore focused on how self-leadership is related to increased sales and organizational effectiveness (Talsi, 2017, p. 15). This thesis, instead, has a focus on the correlation between organizational self-management and remote work

In addition, we aim to study self-leadership in an environment impacted by the effects of covid-19. The pandemic has placed high demands on leaders and employees to continue their work on new principles. This has increased the importance of self-leadership in organizations, as employees have to work more independently and take more control, and leaders need to give employees a high level of autonomy, and prerequisites to motivate themselves to complete tasks. Bracht et.al (2018, p. 119) describes that self-leadership increases with newly developed organizational changes, which thus can be linked to the recent and extensive changes from an office environment to remote work. The relevance of studying the concept of self-leadership, in combination with remote work and digital conditions, is therefore reaffirmed. Studying self-leadership in relation to remote work has further potential in being useful in practice. This is because working remotely seems to increase in organizational settings (Spotify, 2021; Suresh, 2020), none the least in medium- and large-sized organizations on the Swedish labor market (Unit4, 2020; Digital strategi, 2020).

Based on the introduction, we know that employees are less controlled when working remotely (Raišiene et al. 2020, p. 3). In turn, it is important for the individuals to have self-assertiveness (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403) and that they are able to control their own work and situation (Perry, 2018, p. 579). Hence, there is an importance of having a present self-leadership among individuals in an organization working in such an environment. Conclusively, there is a relevance in studying the interrelation of these concepts to contribute to research. In addition, practically for companies to know how to handle challenges and opportunities with promoting self-leadership through remote environments. The presented studies from Novus and Unit4 were both carried out at medium-sized and large companies and showed that Swedish organizations are developing at a rapid pace, as a result of the requirement for flexible workplaces. We, therefore, see the relevance of studying the Swedish market and extending the existing knowledge on the chosen subjects. As it has been proven that the effects of covid-19 accelerated the adaptation to flexible workplaces globally, there is conclusively support for generating a result that can be useful for medium- and large-sized companies even outside the Swedish labor market. Finally, this thesis contributes with a new perspective on self-leadership, based on both leaders and employee's, which has not previously been studied.

1.4 Research question

- How do Swedish medium and large-sized organizations manage self-leadership in remote environments?

1.5 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to explain how different organizations manage self-leadership under digital conditions in remote environments. More specifically, the study aims to generate insights and knowledge from leaders as well as employees from different organizations on how self-leadership can be encouraged in a complex environment of remote character. The intention of the study is to provide research on the subjects of self-leadership

in connection to remote work, but also for the study to serve as support for companies that have, or are going through a transformation to a more remote environment.

1.6 Unit of analysis

Self-leadership is useful to all individuals striving for personal development since it helps the individual to independently choose how to be productive and to reach objectives (Bryant & Kazan, 2012, p. 2), and can thus be applicable to both leaders and employees. To get a varied perspective on how organizations work with self-leadership, we will interview managers and subordinates. Interviewing only leaders or employees could give a misleading result of the actual work with self-leadership, as it only shows the perspective of one party. We will therefore increase the reliability of our collection of empirical data by including angles of incidence from both managers and employees. Furthermore, contribute with an organizational perspective, as this is not found in previous research on the subject of self-leadership.

In the study, *organizations* include both companies and authorities, such as universities. It thus becomes a collective concept for the workplaces examined in the study. The reason why we choose *organizations* instead of *companies* is that some of the respondents work at institutions, which cannot be categorized as companies. *Organizations* thus become an umbrella term for each respondent corporation. The organizations studied in the thesis will be of medium and large size. Medium-sized organizations are classified as operations over 50-250 employees while large-sized organizations have over 250 employees. The reason for choosing to examine medium and large-sized companies is due to the fact that previous studies, presented in the introduction, have depicted several medium and large-sized companies doing digital transformation during the last year.

Additionally, because identified companies of this size have reportedly declared that they will continue in a similar pattern in the future. *Remote environments* further include digital resources and means for notifying remote work, although this is not stated every time the term is mentioned. A prerequisite for participating in the study was moreover that the respondent organizations had changed their way of working due to covid-19.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter is initiated by explaining the meaning of the concept of self-leadership. Following sections present factors affecting self-leadership, motivation, goals and self-efficacy. These concepts are correlated components to the main focus of the study, and will thus be explained in detail. In the end of the theoretical framework, the applicability of the chosen theories and models will be evaluated.

2.1 Self-leadership

Self-leadership has been a researched concept since the 80's. During the years, authors have taken different approaches when exploring and explaining the phenomenon (Stewart et al, 2011, p. 185). Manz (1986, p. 589), who coined the term, defines self-leadership as, and we quote;

“A comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating”.

The term self-leadership is subsequently used to increase the process of understanding an individual's self-control (Stewart et al, 2011, pp. 187-188). How much control and influence an individual can perform is said to be determined by management (Stewart et al., 2019, p. 49). This is balanced against how much control the individual takes voluntarily (Stewart et al., 2019, p. 49). The more self-leadership an organization consists of, the less level of individuals' behavior needs to be controlled by the management (Stewart et al., 2019, p. 49).

Self-leadership can be described by three different components. The first one, *behavior-focused* strategies, aimed at increasing an individual's self-awareness by focusing on self-goal setting, self-reward, and self-feedback. When being aware of one's self-awareness, the individual may understand what behaviors should be changed or eliminated to achieve a certain desired performance. In this sense, research has pointed out that a raised self-awareness, undertaking challenges, and having clearly set goals has a radical effect on motivation as well as performance (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 673). The second strategy, *natural rewards* refers to the task itself and how motivated the individual is to perform the task. When the individual feels that the task is rewarding, he or she tends to enhance the feeling of self-control and understanding, which in turn triggers the motivation (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 673).

Lastly, the *constructive through pattern* strategy includes doing a self-analysis, in order to identify dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions and replace them with more deliberate ones. By doing this analysis and adapting to a more constructive behavior, the individual is likely to optimize and positively affect self-performance. In this category, the concept of “self-talk” is well used (Houghton & Neck, 2002, p. 674). This means that negative and pessimistic thoughts can change towards more optimistic and positive ones, because of the dialogue the individual has with themselves. “Self-imagery” is further a description of the effect individuals' thoughts have on performance. If they imagine themselves performing tasks successfully prior to the accomplishment, the individual is more likely to perform the task in a better manner (Houghton & Neck, 2002, pp. 674-675).

2.1.1 Factors influencing self-leadership

Self-leadership is not only dependent on individuals' characteristics and behaviors, but also by various factors. Yun et al (2006, p. 376) examined how different *leadership styles* affected

individuals' ability to perform self-leadership. The results of the study showed that different leaders affected self-leadership in a positive or negative way depending on their way of leading the follower. As an illustration, a leader with an empowering style influenced the followers' self-leadership capacity (Yun et al, 2006, p. 374). Empowering leadership refers to a leader that is sharing power, authority, and responsibility with their followers (Dubrin, 2015, p. 217). On the contrary, a leader with a directive leadership style obstructed the followers' self-leadership ability. It thus enlightens the need for leaders to develop empowerment skills in order to promote self-leadership among followers (Yun et al, 2006, p. 374).

Neck & Manz (1996, p. 460) has further shown that there is a dynamic relationship between *training* and self-leadership. Where employees who undergo self-leadership training gain increased performance, enthusiasm, and satisfaction in the workplace. The employees surveyed in the study are also described as having reacted positively to the training they were offered, and that their self-efficacy increased as a result (Neck & Manz, 1996, p. 445). Self-efficacy explicates, as previously presented, the belief in one's own capacity to perform specific behaviors or tasks (Milam et al, 2019, p. 321; Dubrin 2015, p. 316). Konradt et al., (2009, p. 339) found that *self-efficacy* had a significant effect on an individual's capacity to perform self-leadership, while more recent research has depicted that the performance of self-leadership influences the individual's self-efficacy (Megheirkouni, 2018, p. 403). It can thus be concluded that self-efficacy affects self-leadership, and that self-leadership affects an individual's self-efficacy. Additionally, Dolbier et al., (2001, p. 482) found a positive correlation between *environmental factors* and self-leadership. As an illustration, the authors concluded aspects such as organizational communication, job satisfaction, relationship to leaders, and team culture to be essential for the pursuance of self-leadership (Dolbier et al., 2001, p. 480). The *organizational culture* is moreover described to be interrelated to self-leadership, (Brach et al, 2017, p. 126). Thus, it can be concluded that several factors, in addition to strategies affecting self-leadership, have an impact on an individual's self-management.

The following model is conducted to create an understanding of different parts that are essential for managing self-leadership in an organizational context. The model is compiled from previously published research on the subject and shows strategies, as well as factors affecting self-management.

Self-leadership



Figure 1. Strategies and factors influencing self-leadership
Source: Authors

The concept of self-leadership has been criticized for being an overlapping theory of already existing motivation theories, and thus explained not to contribute with new knowledge. On the other hand, it has been argued that self-leadership is a normative model, which follows the principles of society and can be applied to different business areas (Neck & Houghton, 2006, p. 274). Self-leadership is thus an explanation of how and why motivation can be expressed. The concept is further valuable to organizational theory because it is based on previously developed motivation theories, but contributes with a personality and environmental perspective (Neck & Houghton, 2006, p. 275). However, the concept of self-leadership comes with challenges.

Marques (2017, p. 15 & 22) conducted 31 interviews with business, non-profit, and academic executives, to examine factors that create challenges with the execution of self-leadership. The author compiled the most commonly mentioned influencing factors for the challenges of self-leadership, including e.g. *unexpected turns* and *the pace of life*. Two of the seven factors were *entrepreneurial spirit* and *change*. Self-leadership presupposes that individuals have an *entrepreneurial spirit*, which means that the individual has a mindset and approach of being creative, imaginary and is driven by guiding oneself. However, far from all individuals has the entrepreneurial spirit, which does not make self-leadership applicable in all settings and to all individuals. On the other hand, being creative is mentioned as important in today's situation in order to encounter problems in both working and private life (Marques, 2017, p. 29). The author thus depicts the relevance of developing or maintaining the entrepreneurial spirit of oneself to develop self-confidence and to seek continuous self-development (Marques, 2017, p. 29-30). Another challenge with self-leadership is *change*, connected to life in general, and the work environment. Individuals often have several jobs and careers throughout their life, which affects their ability to perform self-management. Change can also take place globally, which indirectly or directly challenges individuals' performance of self-leadership (Marques, 2017, p. 23-24), something we see in the changed conditions for

work in the society, affected by the pandemic.

Conclusively, change is ongoing and creates conditions for keeping up with its development (Marques, 2017, p. 24), which creates challenges, but also opportunities for self-leadership. In order to exercise self-leadership, however, *motivation* is a promoting component (Robbins, et al. 2010, p. 140). Hence it is important to create an understanding of how increased motivation positively can affect self-leadership.

2.2 Motivation

One of the most well-known motivational theories derives from a doctorate in psychology, David McClelland. It originates from 1950, and the theory has since then been revised and developed not only by McClelland himself but also by other authors (Miner, 2005, p. 47). McClelland's theory consists of three types of needs that increase individuals' motivation: *nAch* (need for achievement), *nAff* (need for affiliation), and *nPow* (need for power) (Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 145). According to Brandon (2015, p. 430), individuals are motivated by all three needs, rather than one single need. Leaders who provide a basis for the balance of these needs can thus increase employee motivation.

Individuals with a predominant *nAch* are driven by success and performing at a high level. The *achievement need* include different areas, such as accomplish tasks, strive for success, manage complex tasks, and outperform others (OpenStax, 2019, Chapter 7.2; Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 145; Acquah, 2017, p. 12). The individual is explained to be motivated when the task is manageable but of complex nature. Contrary, unmotivated when there's a chance of failure, or when the task is perceived as too simple (Acquah, 2017, p. 13). Individuals with high *nAch* perform at high levels when they receive personal feedback and high personal responsibility (Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 145). Under digital conditions, it is though difficult to confirm employees (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403), which makes it necessary to study this need under digital and distance-based conditions.

nAff refers to being motivated by social interactions (OpenStax, 2019, chapter 7.2). In this sense, motivation is explained to increase when the focus is put on building or maintaining relationships with others and when the individual feels an affiliation with individuals in their group. The need for affiliation is described to be essential for an individual's motivation since people are most likely to feel satisfied in a social environment, being affiliated and recognized (Acquah, 2017, p. 13; Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 145). *nAff* is therefore an important component to take into account during remote work, as all interaction takes place in a digital environment, where socialization can be limited, and a feeling of loneliness is common (Wang et al, 2021, p. 29).

Lastly, *nPow* refers to being motivated by the ability to influence group performance to achieve goals or to perform at a certain level (OpenStax, chapter 7.2). When being motivated by power, individuals strive to have certain authority and control over others, which affects their ways of behaving. These individuals deliver results if they are given a key position or power (Acquah, 2017, p. 13; Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 145). Since a remote environment does not presuppose the same opportunities for interaction and collaboration (Wang et al, 2021, p. 29), it can be argued that it is more difficult to take control over others. Thus, it may be harder for individuals to be motivated by power in these circumstances. Which makes this type of need important to take into account under remote and digital conditions.

The three types of needs that increase individuals' motivation are set out in the following

model, to clarify its various contents.

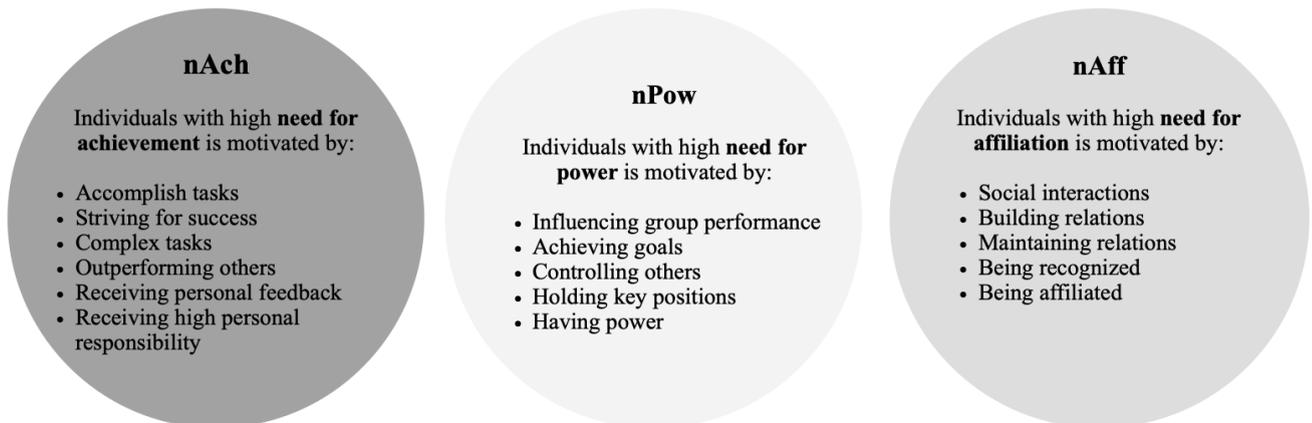


Figure 2. Three types of needs that increase individuals' motivation
Source: Authors

Robbins et al (2010, pp. 145-146) argue that McClelland's theory is of less practical use than other motivation theories. The reason is described as the needs that occur subconsciously in individuals, and are thus difficult to measure. This critique has been presented despite the fact that the theory has received the best support through motivational research. Osemeke & Adegboyega (2017, p. 171) claim that the theory fits into reality and is adaptable in today's society, as it can be applied to all different types of organizations. The theory includes a dynamic view of individuals' needs that change with time and experience, which other motivation theories do not. Thus, the authors believe that the model includes practical relevance. They further argue that other motivational theories than McClelland's ignore factors such as age, gender, and religion, and thus that this aspect should not be the basis for concluding that the model is not applicable to real organizations (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017, p. 171). One aspect that has a prominent impact on motivation, as well as self-leadership, is *clear goals* (Bäcklander, 2019, p. 99; Robbins et al. 2010, 149). When studying self-leadership and motivation, it is thus essential to dive deeper into the concept of *goal-theory*.

2.3 Goal theory

It has emerged that high goals are associated with high performance, and thus that low-stated goals do not have the same powerful impact on people's performance. Thus, it is important that leaders engage in clarifying the goals for their employees and setting reasonable requirements to achieve them. This can be done through support, involving employees in deciding the target provision, which increases the feeling of "owning the goal", and conveys inspiring visions connected to the stated goal (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 706-708). When goals are specific, individuals perform better as a result of the stimulus that takes place internally in the individual. Goals thus create attention towards activities that can contribute to goal fulfillment, and away from activities that do not contribute to meeting the objectives (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 706; Robins et al., 2010, p. 149). Even when goals are more difficult, individuals are motivated to achieve them, as their attention to goal fulfillment is sharpened and their focus increases (Robins et al., 2010, p. 148-149).

The importance of goal-setting is also depicted by Marques-Quinteiro & Curren (2009, p.163). The authors define self-leadership as the capacity of an individual to lead oneself

across challenges and goal achievement. Self-leadership is said to be built upon the motivation and the self-regulation of the individual and is strongly determined by the individual itself as well as the environment for operation. Motivation is further dependent on one's personal values, needs, and beliefs (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p.166). In connection, the capacity of reaching goals is likewise connected to the individual's beliefs. The authors further explain that behavioristic actions and self-set targets and goals facilitate performance to reach desired outcomes (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p. 164).

One component of the self-leadership theory is, as mentioned in chapter 2.1, the *behavior-focused* strategy, which consists of self-setting goals and objectives. The self-leadership and the motivation of the individual are thus crucial for reaching the goals and objectives (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p. 164; Politis, 2005, p. 209). Marques-Quinteiro & Curral (2009, p. 167) examined the relationship between goal orientation and self-leadership in three different companies and 108 employees in total. The result of their study showed that there was a strong correlation between self-leadership and the ability to reach a set goal. A strong self-leadership thus facilitates the capacity of reaching the goal while a weak self-leadership hinders the capacity of reaching a set goal (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p. 164). The authors explained that self-leadership is built on goal management and that the definition of *how* and *why* of a certain task is of high essentiality in order to enable the individual to reach the desired outcome (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p. 164). Robbins et al (2010, p. 149) also presented that goals should be specific to positively affect performance. A basic precondition for goal orientation is acceptance, and the willingness to strive towards the set goal. There is thus a greater chance that performance will increase if a goal is clear and challenging than unclear and simple. On the other hand, acceptance of the goal by the person who is to perform the task is required (Robbins et al. 2010, p. 149).

The following model is based on the presented information on goals and depicts how clear goals can be facilitated. The model is conducted to visualize what impact clear goals have on employees, as well as their performance.



Figure 3. Goal theory
Source: Authors

Throughout the theoretical chapter, criticism of selected theories has been presented. However, finding criticisms of goal setting is hard, as we have not focused on a specific model. Instead, we have chosen to include results from different researchers' findings on goal

theory and interrelated the information with findings on self-leadership. What can be pointed out as a potential drawback, however, is that challenging goals can lead to increased stress. Goals can further be challenging, or even harmful if there are conflicts among individual's different goals. This, as it can hinder group performance. (Latham & Locke, 2006, p. 334, 337). As goals can negatively affect individuals, and thus organizations, we believe that it is of utmost importance to include goal-setting theory when studying self-leadership. This, to examine how goal-setting affects the respondent's self-leadership.

Conclusively, goal orientation has a strong connection to an individual's motivation. The motivation of the individual determines how much effort and time the individual is willing to put into a certain task in order to reach set goals (Marques-quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p. 166). Conclusively, an individual's motivation affects the performance of self-leadership, which in turn determines the ability to reach a set goal. Ives & Cox (2012, p. 96) continues to explain that clearly defined goals are a prerequisite for achievement and also for self-efficacy. However, they refer to the leader's ability to motivate employees as *coaching*. Compiled in the article, *coaching* includes bringing together individuals' potential with performance. This is done by leaders coaching (motivating) and providing support to the employees to achieve the set objectives. This thus confirms the earlier presentation of the theory that leaders play a major role in employees' motivation to achieve goals, but with another designation. A further explanation on why difficult goals motivate individuals more than effortless goals is described by the concept of *self-efficacy* (Robins et al., 2010, p. 151).

2.4 Self-efficacy

As previously mentioned, *self-efficacy* explains individuals' belief in their own capacity to perform behaviors or tasks (Milam, 2019, p. 3; Dubrin, 2015, p. 316). The higher self-efficacy an individual has, the more he or she strives to complete tasks of a tough nature (Prussia et.al, 1998, p. 524). This means that high self-efficacy increases high motivation, and low self-efficacy reduces the motivation to complete tasks (Dubrin 2015, p. 316). The component *constructive thought pattern*, which is described in chapter 2.1 on self-leadership, also plays a role in individuals' thought patterns in self-efficacy (Megheirkouni, 2018, p. 394). Even the component *natural reward* can be seen as a correlator to self-efficacy. This, since natural reward, refers to the extent that the individual feels satisfied and rewarded by accomplishing a task or activity (Megheirkouni, 2018, p. 394). Thus, the feeling of pleasure and fulfillment can enhance the self-efficacy of the individual. Prussia et al., (1998, p. 523) state that there is a dynamic relationship between self-leadership's influence on an individual's level of self-efficacy.

In this sense, the empowerment that comes with self-leadership when having clear goals and individually affecting one's work increases the individual's control and self-confidence. The enhanced control and confidence, in turn, triggers self-efficacy in a positive manner (Prussia et al., 1998, pp. 525-526). There is also a connection and strong empirical support for the link between self-efficacy and performance. The higher an individual's self-efficacy is, the higher he or she performs (Prussia et.al, 1998, p. 525). Overall, self-efficacy is a result of an individual's confidence to perform a task or undertake an activity (Bandura, 2010, p. 1), while self-leadership is the summary of the individual's behaviors and attitudes. Thus, self-leadership is a more general orientation and is a more studied concept than self-efficacy. For a more specific explanation for motivation and achievement, self-efficacy is thus an important concept to study in relation to self-leadership, than self-leadership individually (Prussia et.al, 1998, p. 527).

Since there is a link between self-efficacy and performance, it is important for leaders to influence their employees' levels of self-efficacy in order to achieve the set organizational goal. This can be done by supplementing self-efficacy with goal theory, to achieve higher performance. When leaders give employees more difficult goals to accomplish, the individual's self-efficacy tends to increase. This thus results in the individuals setting higher goals for their own performance. The reason for this phenomenon is that individuals experience trust from management when they are responsible for higher goal fulfillment. This in turn increases the self-confidence of the individual and thus their belief in their own performance, to cope with the specific task (Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 152). Megheirkouni (2018, p. 395) means that when goals and objectives are set, an individual that has a high self-efficacy is more motivated to complete the task. This, in contrast to individuals with low self-efficacy, who are less likely to be motivated to complete the task and achieve the set goals. Thus, if leaders present specific, and challenging goals to their employees, their level of motivation and performance will increase.

Self-efficacy mainly describes whether an individual *can* or *cannot* perform a task. However, this is not only affected by the individual's will and belief in him/herself, but also by additional factors. The critique of self-efficacy thus involves psychological factors that come into play, other than individuals' own belief in their ability. For example, it has been concluded that health and related behaviors have a strong impact on motivation (Williams, 2015, p. 447). When examining the concept in relation to motivation and self-leadership, it is thus important to understand that not only the individual's belief in his/her ability affects their self-efficacy, but also other factors, such as poor health. In this study, we will conclusively take other aspects into consideration, then just one's belief in the ability, when interviewing the respondents.

The following model is a compilation of the concepts that have an impact and are influenced by self-leadership, which all affect individual- and organizational performance.

Factors influencing performance

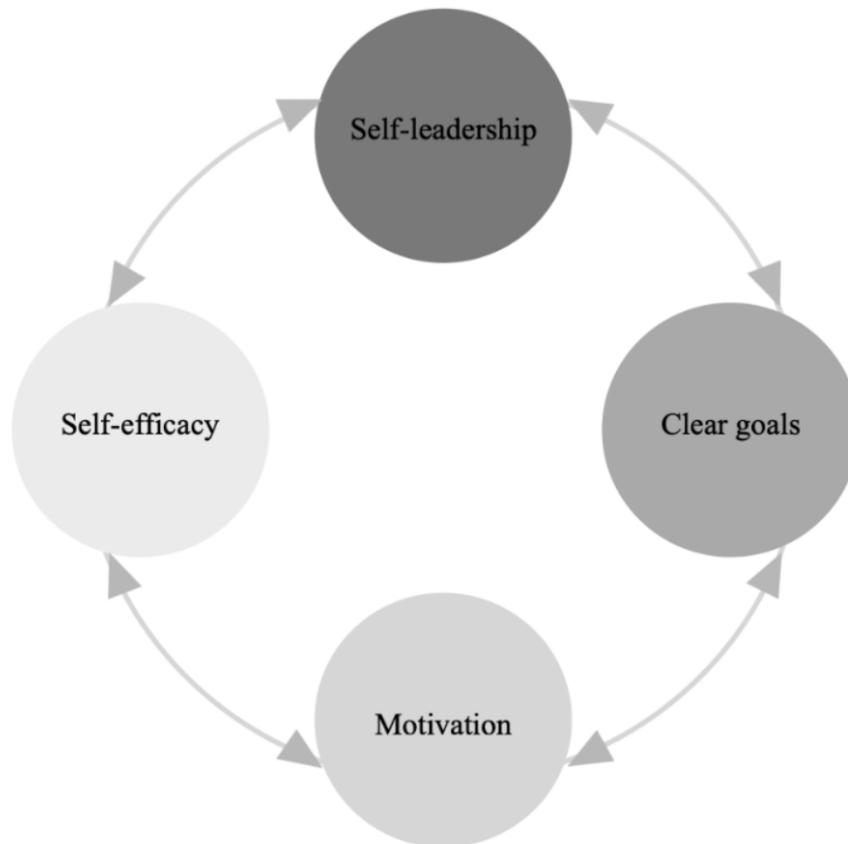


Figure 4. Self-leadership and its affecting components
Source: Authors

2.5 The applicability of the theoretical framework

Self-leadership, motivation, goal theory, and self-efficacy are all themes that influence this thesis. These concepts are all initially explained in the introduction chapter and subsequently more in-depth depicted in the chapter *theoretical framework*. By digging deeper into the understanding and correlation of these aspects, we have established a basis in order to obtain empirical data, to be able to answer the research question as well as fulfill the study's purpose. Below, we have stated the different themes' relevance to the study and also how the concepts will be applicable in the subsequent parts of the study.

The theoretical framework is initiated by an explanation of the concept of self-leadership. Consequently, strategies and factors influencing self-leadership are presented in order to provide an understanding of how self-leadership can be regulated. These strategies and factors are presented in a concluded model to create an understanding of self-leadership. However, the strategies will not be evaluated to the same extent as the influencing factors in this thesis. Instead, they are included to increase the understanding of the concept, and its various aspects. On the contrary, we claim that it is more essential to include the factors influencing self-leadership in this thesis, as they all can have an effect on how organizations manage self-leadership in remote environments. Thus, the interview questions and empirical retrieval related to self-leadership will mainly be connected to the presented theories on factors affecting the management of self-leadership. Self-leadership will also, in order to answer the research question of the thesis, be examined in the perspectives of the new environment of working remotely.

Since a main component of self-leadership is explained to be motivation, the following chapter in the theoretical framework includes a common theory on motivation, as well as other perspectives on the established theory. The connection between motivation and self-leadership is also depicted. When collecting the empirical material, McClelland's theory with complementary sources and the interrelation between motivation and self-leadership will be of interest in order to understand how leaders' and employees' motivation affects their self-leadership and vice versa. Lastly, we have conducted a model that depicts a compiled model of McClelland's theory of needs. The information in this model will lie as a basis when examining the motivation of respondents. Moreover, the conducted interview guide will contain questions on the individual's and organization's work to enhance motivation, and lastly the connection between motivation and self-leadership in a remote context.

Sequentially, the theory of goals is presented, since it is an affecting component of motivation and self-leadership. This section is mainly explaining the importance of goal-setting and having clear goals. It is furthermore depicted how leaders can support employees in goal-setting and what clear goals tend to lead to. This section will lay as a basis in order to understand how employees are working with their own goal-setting, but also the perception and relevance of support from leaders related to goals. In addition, leaders will respond to questions of how goal setting is accomplished and how leaders themselves can support employees to reach the set goals. In this section, we have compiled a model to increase the understanding of goals for the reader and to clarify how the different concepts are connected. Lastly, the correlation between goals and motivation will be examined in this study, in order to understand how the components affect each other.

As a final component of self-leadership, self-efficacy is examined. This section is depicting how self-efficacy affects an individual's self-leadership, but also how previously presented components, motivation, and goal-theory, are related to the concept. The chapter is then concluded with a model that ties together all parts of the theoretical framework that lies as a basis for the thesis.

3. Theoretical point of departure

In this chapter, scientific theoretical starting points will be introduced. The choice of subject, followed by ontological and epistemological viewpoints will be presented. This, to increase the understanding of the choices made when conducting the study. The chapter is concluded with a critical discussion of the thesis selected sources.

3.1 Choice of subject

We are currently studying our master's year in management. The interest in studying challenges for leaders in today's society in more detail has thus increased during the last year. As covid-19 has placed extensive requirements on society, organizations have been forced to adapt to new ways of working, among other things through digital solutions. With the knowledge that the importance of self-leadership further has grown as a result of remote work, we wanted to examine these circumstances in line with leaders' challenges. We additionally wanted to contribute to already published studies made on the Swedish market, with more in-depth research. In conclusion, the final choice was based on the gaps we found in already existing literature, and what authors and researchers pointed out as lacking in terms of self-leadership. Thus, the research approach resulted in *how Swedish medium and large-sized companies manage self-leadership in remote environments*.

Prior to the initiation of conducting the thesis, both of us were familiar with the term of self-leadership from previous courses taken within the master's program. However, one of us had recently studied the concept on an in depth-level and thus could contribute with good input on important insights into the theory. This input would then lie as a basis for inspiration on themes that permeate the thesis. In addition, one of us had been working remotely and with digital tools since the pandemic, and thus could relate the subject to her own experiences. We both had further been studying remotely during the past year, which led to an understanding of how work in such an environment could be carried out. Conclusively, we both had academic knowledge, as well as experience with self-leadership in a remote environment, albeit somewhat limited in an organizational context. It was thus of interest for both of us to further examine the subject within organizational settings and to get business professionals' views and thoughts on how self-leadership can be facilitated in a complex environment of remote character.

3.2 Research approach

In an initial phase of this thesis, information regarding self-leadership, remote working, motivation, self-efficacy, and goals were analyzed in order to gather an understanding of the different themes of the study. The knowledge that we gained from reading theories in these proposed themes then laid as a basis for the introduction as well as for the theoretical framework of the study. The direction of starting off the study with theory can be connected to the *deductive research approach*. A deductive stance of a study emanates from theory and aims at testing already existing theories and conclusions (Collis & Hussey, 2011, p. 7). The deductive approach begins with an analysis of theories within a specific subject, the process is then directed to produce hypotheses based on the information gathered in the theories. These hypotheses are further tested, usually by data collection, and are finally rejected or confirmed. In some deductive studies, the aim is to make a revision of the existing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 11). Our study does not aim to test hypotheses, nor make a revision of already existing theories. Rather, the theories are primarily used to build an understanding of the chosen themes. Thus, the deductive approach is not completely suitable for describing this study's research approach. The reversed direction of the deduction is *induction*. An inductive approach refers to developing a new theory derived from collected empirical

material. This approach is mainly used in a study of qualitative caliber (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 12-13).

After conducting the theoretical chapter, the process progressed to collecting empirical material. This by interviewing 9 respondents on their perception of the subject. The findings were later connected to the previously presented theories and models, in order to develop knowledge for self-leadership. Finally, we could draw a conclusion based on our collected material and contribute a new perspective on self-leadership with our study. As a consequence, the process has commuted from deduction to induction multiple times when conducting the study. The direction of commuting between induction and deduction is called *abduction*. In this approach, the theoretical framework built on previous research lays the basis for the study and aims at creating awareness on the researched subject (Saunders & Tosey, 2015, p. 23). However, the main focus of the abductive approach is on the collected empirical material, and thus not on presented theories. The findings of this study thus aim to connect back to previously presented research, but also to complement with new orientations (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 1999, p. 55). As our study has been characterized by a process in this direction, abductive reasoning is the method that defines this thesis.

3.3 Ontology

Killam (2013, p. 7) explains ontology as a researcher's perception of the nature of reality. "What exists" and "what is true" are therefore ontological questions. The answers to the questions stem from researchers' understanding of reality. "Nature of reality" is further Collis & Hussey (2014, p. 49) definition of the ontological assumption. Saunders et al (2009, p. 110) depict two different aspects of the ontological approach; *objectivism* and *subjectivism*. Objectivism refers to social entities existing in an external reality from other social actors' existence. As an example, management can be seen as a social entity of objectivism. The structure of where different management teams operate may differ, however, in an objective approach, the function of a management team is always the same. The management team invariably has the function to get reports from subordinates and to further report to higher management. It is a function existing in an external reality from social actors, meaning that it is not affected by people in the organization. The function of management is explained to always be the same, which in turn makes it objective (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 21).

In this thesis, results will be based on different experiences of social actors, i.e respondents of the study. The perception of self-leadership in a social context will completely be based on an individual's subjective viewpoint and will most likely differ between respondents. Thus, the participating individuals' perspectives will not be of an objective kind. Rather, their contribution will lead to a subjective aspect of the study. The subjective stance of ontology refers to a phenomenon being influenced by social actors' perceptions and actions. It is thus essential to study these social actors' meanings and perspectives to understand a certain phenomenon (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 111). In our conducted thesis, the social actors will be the leaders, as well as the employees. Their perspectives and perceptions will be studied in order to understand the concept of self-leadership. Conclusively, we do not believe that our proposed research can be made from an objective stance of ontology since the phenomenon of self-leadership highly depends on different individuals' subjective viewpoints and exertion.

3.4 Epistemology

The relationship between science and the researchers' findings is explained by epistemology. Questions such as "how do we know what we know" are therefore present within the epistemological approach. The difference between ontology and epistemology can be

described by the researchers' relationship between themselves and what *can* be known, versus how the researcher learned the knowledge and *how they know* what they know (Killam, 2013, p. 8). There are further two perspectives within the epistemological assumption; *positivism* and *interpretivism*. The first mentioned perspective explains that valid knowledge is derived from observed and measured data. Positivist researchers thus keep a distance from what is being investigated and studied, in order to gather valid knowledge. In interpretivism, the belief in valid knowledge is instead measured on the basis of the interaction with the intention of research. Thus, the distance between the researcher and what is studied is minor than in the positivist view (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 47).

In this thesis, we want to explain how Swedish medium and large-sized companies work with self-leadership during remote environments. Thus, we examine how different individuals (leaders and employees) work with selected areas (self-leadership, motivation, goals, and self-efficacy), and how they can relate to each other. We thus use an epistemological approach. Due to our interaction and close work with the study groups, our approach can be likened to interpretivism. Furthermore, the results of the study have been based on subjective assumptions from the respondents, which strengthens the connection to the interpretive approach (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 47). The fact that the study is carried out qualitatively also strengthens our starting point in the interpretive approach, since positivists test hypotheses, which is connected to a quantitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15).

3.5 Literature review

In this study, the literature has been collected from various databases. Among others, *EBSCO*, *Emerald Journals*, and *SAGE knowledge*. Journals in both management and psychology have been used. Further, publications from Umeå University's own database, as well as Google Scholar have been utilized. These articles have given us a solid background to our chosen research topic, and have been used to strengthen the arguments for the deficient gaps existing in research on self-leadership and remote work. The articles selected for the study have mainly been of peer-reviewed character, meaning that the publications have been reviewed and approved by experts before their publication (Vetenskapsrådet, 2010, s. 14).

The availability of English information on the Swedish labor market is somewhat limited. However, English references have been helpful in understanding and explaining the chosen subjects in the thesis, such as self-leadership and self-efficacy. In order to find information on the researched topics on the Swedish labor market, literature from Swedish authors has been collected, in addition to English references. Besides scientific articles, this study is also characterized by non-fiction literature. These books have been useful when gathering information related to the subjects of self-leadership, motivation, goals, and self-efficacy. The information retrieved from the books has provided us with an understanding of the examined topics, theories, and models. However, every chapter containing non-fiction books has been supported with scientific articles. Thus, we believe that the information presented is more credible and multilateral when being complimented by other literature references.

In the initial phase of the study, we used different keywords in order to find a research gap and to ensure that no study of the same kind had been conducted. In this phase, keywords that characterized our search were *self-leadership in remote environments*, *self-leadership when working remotely*, *self-leadership in Sweden*, etc. No results in relation to our proposed research were found, and self-leadership had only been examined in other situations or through other aspects, as presented in chapter 1.2. Thus, it could confirm the presented research gap for this study. Keywords were primarily used in English since they resulted in

more relevant results when compared to the results of the Swedish keywords. The Swedish keywords were instead mainly used to identify previously studied directions of self-leadership on the Swedish market, to ensure the uniqueness of our thesis.

The keywords we used in our literature research are listed below:

Subject	Swedish keywords	English keywords
Self-leadership	Självledarskap Självledarskap inom svenska verksamheter Självledarskap sverige	Self-leadership Self-leadership in a remote environment Components on self-leadership Self-management Self-leadership theory The social context of self-leadership Leadership, self, and identity Organizational behavior Self-leadership and performance Self-leadership and innovation Work-role innovation
Motivation	Motivation Självledarskap och motivation Motivation och digitalt arbete	Motivation Self-leadership and motivation Motivational theories Motivation working remotely Motivation Social cognitive theory Task motivation
Goals	Självledarskap och mål Mål i organisationer Måluppfyllelse	Self-leadership goals Goal-setting Useful theory of goal setting Practically useful theory of goal-setting
Self-efficacy	-	Self-leadership and self-efficacy Self-efficacy Self-efficacy critique Self-efficacy and goals setting Prerequisites for self-efficacy Self-efficacy and motivation

Table 1: Own processing of keywords for obtaining literature

3.6 Criticisms of chosen references

We have related our literature review to four principles of reference criticism; *authenticity*, the *time criteria*, the *dependency criteria* and the *tend criteria*. This ensures a critical viewpoint of the collected material and its sources of origin (Strachal & Thurén, 2011, p. 13-18). To reduce the risk of flawed *authenticity* in the selected sources, i.e. that the sources did not contain falsified or distorted information (Strachal & Thurén, 2011, pp. 13-14), we have carefully examined references throughout the thesis. As previously mentioned, the majority of the information is taken from peer-reviewed articles and non-fiction literature. The non-fiction literature has been released by publishing companies and is thus also reviewed for publication, which indicates that they are reliable. Although books are reviewed before publication, it is important to be critical of the chosen references. We have further supplemented these sources with scientific literature as far as possible. To a small extent, websites have been used, for example, to present experts in the field of self-leadership, which could not be found in articles. In conclusion, peer-reviewed literature has been dominant in

this work, to ensure the authenticity of the information.

The time criteria entail the time for publication of literature. The more recent in time the information is published, the more reliable it becomes (Strachal & Thurén, pp. 14-15). The oldest reference used in the first concluded chapters was published in 1986, which only includes the definition of self-leadership, from its original source. The remaining references are published from 1996 and onward, with the majority published in 2020. This is with the exception of a reference from 1982, which includes information on truth criteria for scientific writing. The information is thus predominantly reliable with regard to the time criteria. However, we have chosen to use original sources as far as possible, to ensure authenticity. Recently published references are moreover a part of the *independence criterion*, which depicts that the information taken from a reference should not have undergone several steps, as this may reduce the reference reliability (Strachal & Thurén, 2011, pp. 15-17). Instead of using secondary references, we have sought out the first published information and its authors. This, by analyzing the reference lists in scientific articles and books. However, this has resulted in some references being described as "too old", in terms of the time criterion, but reliable in terms of the independence criterion. In summary, we have carried out consideration for the use of different references, where we have used recent literature as much as possible, but also supplemented with older ones to create a holistic understanding of the concepts and theories used.

In conclusion, the *tendency criterion* means that the interests of authors, politically, economically, or ideologically, should not affect their published information (Strachal & Thurén, 2011, p. 18). During the work, we have used various references in the same area, to confirm and/or reject information on selected topics. In the different sections of the thesis, we have used as many as 12 different authors (see the chapter on self-leadership) for a chosen topic. Seven for the chapter goals, as well as motivation, and six for the chapter self-efficacy. However, we can not guarantee impartiality. This, despite the fact that we have connected selected sources who discuss the same area. Though, as mentioned earlier, we believe that information from peer-reviewed sources should be considered reliable.

4. Practical method

4.1 The qualitative method

This chapter contains an ingoing description of the methods chosen to fulfill the purpose of the study. The section is initiated by an explanation of the chosen qualitative method followed by the chosen study method. Conduction of the interviews and the interview guide is also depicted. This chapter further includes an exposition on what organizations and respondents that have been included in the research.

We have previously presented a lack of qualitative, as well as empirical studies in the areas of self-leadership. Thus, the research method of this study will be of qualitative structure to contribute to the gap that exists in current theory on the subject. The generalizability of the qualitative method has been criticized. Precisely because there are a small number of people studied, and no overall result can thus be drawn to be applied to other similar contexts (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 408-409). However, this study intends to *explain* how different companies manage self-leadership in a remote environment, and thus not intends to generalize a result. Although, the results can show how similar situations could be expressed and handled in other organizations of the same nature. For example, how companies that implement remote work can promote self-leadership in their organization. In addition to contributing qualitative research on the subject, we believe that a general result should include more respondents than we have the capacity and intention to study. Generalization is further usually made in quantitative research, which we will not conduct (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 163). However, we will have to deal with the criticism of the qualitative research method when conducting a study of this caliber.

In order to create an open insight into the study's choices as possible, we ought to explain our choices as transparently as possible. As an illustration, what limitation the study entails, what sample is suitable and relevant (company size and market) and how the respondents have been selected. This, because the openness of the qualitative method has been criticized, as it is difficult to identify the researcher's approach and conclusion work (Collis & Hussey, 2014, pp. 408-409). Since we're going to conduct interviews with the chosen respondents, we will further not be excluded from participation in collecting the empirical material. The chosen method will thus lead to subjectivity, a critique towards the qualitative method in obtaining the empirical material (Ryan et al. 2007, p. 742; Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 408). The critique of being subjective is mainly drawn to the risk of integrating the researcher's own perspective on what is important in the examined subject (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 408-409). However, we have an intention to avoid asking questions related to our viewpoints and thoughts on the chosen subjects. Additionally, we will use the conducted interview guide presented in the following chapters, and attached in the appendix. Even though there is a possibility of subjectively influencing the respondent's answers with this method, we believe that it is an advantage to conduct and stick to an interview guide, and thus increasing the likelihood of respondents perceiving the questions in a similar way. As they are offered to ask open-ended questions and give open-ended answers. Throughout the thesis, we have moreover intentionally avoided linking our own opinions and viewpoint on the examined subject.

The respondents in this study are chosen from presented perspectives in chapter 1.5, as well as personal contact networks. It is important to point out that none of us have taken part in any of the studied case companies, and thus not intended to affect the respondents' answers to the advantage or disadvantage of the case company. However, if we had been employed in some of the respective companies, this would possibly have subjectively affected the outcome of the study result. This is, for example, we had not disregarded our own

experiences within the business. The relationship with the case company would thus have had the possibility to influence the interviews, empirical data, or analysis. Since this is not the case, none of us have subjectively affected the study to any significant extent. However, as previously mentioned, subjectivity is a general risk when utilizing the qualitative method (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 408).

Unlike a quantitative study, which includes static and mathematical instruments for studying collected data from a large number of people, the qualitative method includes a lower amount, but more in-depth data (Collis & Hussey, 2014, pp. 5-6). Examples of qualitative collection methods are interviews, surveys with open answers or conducting a case study (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 47). In this work, interviews with both managers and employees at medium and large-sized companies in Sweden will be conducted. Moreover, we will perform a multiple case study, as we examine more than one single unit (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 67).

According to Tracy (2010, pp. 839-840), there are eight factors for successful qualitative work. These factors are; *worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical* and *meaningful coherence*. The criteria, together with their definitions, are presented in the model below. How the criteria are applied to this study is further included in the right-hand column of the table:

Criteria	Definition	Adaptation
Worthy topic	The topic of the research is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting 	The subject in this research is relevant both for theoretical and practical knowledge, within Sweden. The subject is right in time, as the study is based on the societal changes that covid-19 has placed on medium-sized and large companies in the Swedish labor market. Furthermore, we have ensured that similar studies have not been conducted and that we are solely carrying out a study of this nature.
Rich rigor	The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis processes 	This study uses several different theories closely related to self-leadership in order to build an understanding of the topic. Nine interviews are conducted to develop the empirical findings and to get insights from different professionals. After the ninth held interview, no contributory information was perceived and there was no need for additional empirical material. To understand how the answers were related, a comparative analysis will be made. The choice of method is explained in the final section of the practical method.
Sincerity	The study is characterized by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) • Transparency about the methods and challenges 	Throughout this thesis, we will carefully explain and be transparent with the chosen methods. In addition, we will include a critical viewpoint on the challenges of the used approaches.
Credibility	The research is marked by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling • Triangulation or crystallization • Multivocality • Member reflections 	This study will clearly present the respondents' opinions and experiences without distorting its information. Their views on each topic in the study will be presented in detail, including direct quotes from various respondents.

Resonance	The research influences affect, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalizations • Transferable findings 	The findings of this study will be transferable to other organizations facing similar situations. Further, the implications will be useful for managers as well as employees.
Significant contribution	The research provides a significant contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically 	This study will contribute to existing theories as well as implications for managers and employees. The contributions are thoroughly explained in the introductory chapter of the thesis.
Ethical	The research considers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research) 	The study's respondents were all informed of their anonymity and rights regarding their participation. They are given the opportunity to read through the compiled empirical data linked to their interview in order to approve its content and draw attention to possible misinterpretations or mistakes. Additional ethical considerations such as avoidance to harm participants and informed consent are discussed in the coming section.
Meaningful coherence	The study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other 	The intention and efforts made in the study have been characterized by consistent theme methods, suitable to fulfill the research question and purpose.

Table 2: Eight factors for successful qualitative research

4.2 Multiple case study

As previously mentioned, the accumulated empirical data will be based on different case companies, and we are thus conducting a multiple case study. Case studies are normally used with the objective to investigate a specific phenomenon (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 67). Such studies are conducted to deepen the understanding of concepts or theories within selected individuals or groups, and to investigate current research problems (Yin, 2009, s. 4). In multiple case studies, the research is accomplished on *different* individuals or organizations (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 68-71), where the samples are studied in parallel (Yin, 2018, p. 132-138). This thesis intends to *explain* the phenomenon of how Swedish medium and large-sized companies manage self-leadership in remote environments. However, multiple case studies can also aim to *test hypotheses* or intend to generalize a result that can be applied to other similar units (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 68-71). Neither of the latter two alternatives will be the aim of this study, as the purpose is to explain, and not to create hypothesis tests or generalize a result.

Conducting a multiple-case study makes it possible to analyze the information collected in contrast to other samples, and not only in specific cases. These contrasts can be used to detect similarities or differences between certain cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). To enable an explanation of how Swedish organizations work with the chosen concepts, this study will draw attention to similarities and differences from the collected material. The empiric is thus processed through a *comparative analysis*. By collecting information from different cases, more angles are created and the study generates a broader understanding of what has been

researched (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). This research method is thus considered convincing and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550; Yin, 2018, p. 61). In conclusion, this method fits well with this thesis, as we want to explain the phenomenon with collected material from both employees and managers from various companies. If we instead investigated the phenomenon at a specially selected unit, a single-case study would have been the suitable option (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 68-71). The thesis is further categorized as a *descriptive* case study, as it aims to describe the phenomenon chosen to be investigated. Descriptive research should explain the “how” of a problem, which is likewise, the aim of this thesis (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 5).

4.3 Selection

When collecting material in qualitative research, several different methods can be used. In case studies of qualitative character, a common option is to do a non-random sampling. This, because case studies tend to examine different real-life phenomena, and often with small samples (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 22). If we intended to study a bigger sample in this study, we would instead have adapted the random sampling, as it is considered less time-consuming. However, random sampling constitutes a major risk since sampling error is more likely to occur (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 19). In this thesis, we have intentionally chosen which respondents should be participating. This, since the respondents, need to fulfill certain qualifications in order to be able to contribute to the study. We have thus used the non-sampling approach. On the contrary, a random sample cannot assure that the chosen respondents would have fitted into the study and comply with the presented criteria (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 22). In order for participants to be able to contribute to this thesis on self-leadership in remote environments, the following requirements needed to be fulfilled:

- Being a leader or an employee in a Swedish organization > 50 employees.
- Working remotely the majority of working time, as a result of the pandemic.

Non-probability sampling is often associated with four different types of approaches. *Quota sampling* is the first approach which refers to a sample that should represent a wider population. Second, *snowball sampling* is a method where participants recruit other participants suitable for the study. *Convenience sampling* is the approach of selecting easily available participants and lastly, *purposive sampling* is the method of choosing a respondent of the researcher’s knowledge that fits into the right settings of the sample group (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 22). In this thesis, we have made the decision to study leaders and employees from different organizations. These research participants are chosen by a merge of the convenient and purposive approach. This, since we have reached out to individuals of our knowledge that are working remotely and could fit into the study. Consequently, the respondents were chosen from our knowledge and had to fulfill the above-stated requirement.

If we intended to study leaders and employees from the same organization, we would have chosen the snowball-sampling approach (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 22). However, this option could be connected to certain confidentiality issues. This, since we do not have enough insight into several different organizations, suitable for the study, to be able to independently choose leaders as well as employees without help from the leader or the employee. In turn, the respondents within the organization would not be anonymous to each other. It could thus result in the answers not being completely truthful since respondents from the same organization could talk to each other prior to the interviews with an intention to fine-tune reality. Moreover, it could result in respondents not being honest, as it can be sensitive to give your honest opinion on perception of work to other colleagues and managers. Consequently,

we have proposed to study leaders and employees from different companies in order to ensure anonymity and thus, hopefully, get truthful and honest responses from the examined individuals.

4.3.1 Access

In order to find respondents, we used different methods to access suitable individuals that we believed would contribute to our study. On the one hand, we searched the web for suitable candidates. This led us to several pages, as well as articles, where we identified individuals that could fit the study. We also identified what type of organizations the individuals were working within, to determine if they would attain the stated requirements. We then contacted the potential candidates and fortunately, several of the asked respondents accepted participation in the study. On the other hand, we used our own network to identify suitable candidates. We made sure that the individuals would fit the study by initiating a dialogue with the potential candidates before integrating them. In this way, we could reach our aim of having several employees and several managers from various organizations contributing to this study.

4.4 Interview techniques

When conducting qualitative analysis, the most common way of collecting material is to do interviews. There are mainly three different ways in how the interviews can be formed; unstructured, structured, and semi-structured interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). In an unstructured interview, questions are not prepared in advance. Rather, they evolve during the execution of the interview (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 133). This form of the interview can be equivalent to an informal conversation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). In contrast to an unstructured interview, a structured interview follows an interview guide with predetermined questions. The interview should then follow the interview guide in the exact same order for all interviews in order to give respondents the same conditions for answering the questions. Questions in a structured interview guide are often of close character, meaning that the answer is often yes or no (Bernser & Dybkjaker, 2009, p. 163).

In this study, structured nor unstructured interviews will be conducted. Rather, we will use the semi-structured interview technique. A semi-structured interview is often arranged on certain themes of the study. The question in this form of interview is predetermined by the interviewer and contains open-ended questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315), meaning that the question cannot be answered by yes or no but allows the respondent to answer more briefly and in more than one word (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 212). The reason why we have chosen a semi-structured way of conducting our interview is that it allows us to ask follow-up questions, which is not an option in a structured interview where all respondents should be asked the same questions. Excluding the option of a structured interview also minimizes the risk of asking leading questions (Wilson, 2013, p. 26). In addition, we have chosen the semi-structured interview since it is explained to be suitable when examining individuals' opinions and perceptions of a phenomenon that the researcher has limited knowledge about (Wilson, 2013, p. 25). Since our perception is that we have limited knowledge of self-leadership, especially in a remote context, we consider other individuals' points of view as crucial to understanding the research phenomenon.

We have further arranged our interview guide around themes, *self-leadership*, *remote work*, *motivation*, *self-efficacy*, and *goals*, which can be derived from the semi-structured way of making interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467). The reason why we excluded an

unstructured way of conducting the interview is mainly drawn to the risk of not being able to analyze the material. A major drawback with the unstructured interview is thus that the respondents' answers may vary to a large extent since the interview is not arranged around questions or themes. It can therefore be complicated to ensure that the collected empirical material will be possible to draw conclusions from since the interviewer cannot control the questions or topics such as in a structured or semi-structured interview (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 135). We also believe that it would be a challenge to compare individuals' answers in an unstructured form of an interview. Instead, by using predetermined topics and questions, we believe that the answers will be comparative and thus, more likely to generate a specific result for this study.

4.5 Pilot interview

In order to test the interview guide, we decided to conduct a pilot study prior to the planned interviews. This, to get feedback, new insights and identify potential problems with the composed guide (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 205; Yujin, 2010, p. 191). Further, to ensure that selected methods and ideas work well in practice, as in theory (Teijlingen, 2002, p. 33; Jairath et al., 2000, p. 92). A pilot interview can be performed on an individual that has small knowledge on the researched topic, but a preferable way is to test the guide on individuals that are similar to the sample of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2009, 205). As a conclusion, we decided to pilot the interview on an individual that fits into the set requirements for this study. The pilot interview gave us a good understanding of how we could modify the guide that we initially had conducted. As an illustration, we came to the conclusion that some questions did not contribute to the aim of the study and could therefore be eliminated. We also identified that some of the questions could be answered by yes or no. Since the aim of our interview was to have open-ended questions, we revised the closed questions to fit better into the semi-structured interview. In addition, the pilot interview further gave us an indication of the time extent. Thus, we could inform the participating respondents of the time required to complete the interview.

4.6 Interview guide

Denscombe (2016, p. 428) presents the main principles to consider during the implementation of qualitative research. These include that the researcher must present him/herself and ask the respondents for their consent to participate in the study. The layout of the interview should be presented, and the respondents must be informed of their possibility for anonymity, confidentiality, and other ethical principles. With an understanding of these main principles, we informed the respondents about their anonymity at the beginning of each interview. The principle of anonymity had, however, already been discussed at an earlier stage. This, since anonymity, was presented as a requirement for some of the respondent's participation in the study. We further presented how the respondents' answers would be handled and used in the thesis. In order to build trust with the respondents, we started each interview with three introductory questions linked to their background in the company (see [appendix 1](#)). This, based on Hallin & Helin's (2018, p. 42) statement that introductory questions about the respondent can create confidence in the researchers, and thus create a good start to the interview. To give the respondents a clearer picture of us and our interest in the study's chosen topics, we composed a presentation about ourselves and background to the study choices.

In the previous section, we have described the choice of semi-structured interviews, where we have previously selected themes as a background for the interviews. In this study, these themes include; *self-leadership*, *remote work*, *goals*, *motivation*, and *self-efficacy*. The

interviews thus continued in questions related to the various themes. All questions were asked to the respective respondents, however, with different approaches. An example of this is; “Do the employees get/do you get any training in how you can manage your daily work? What type of training?”. This, to adapt the same type of question to different participants, leaders, and employees. The interview also consisted of in-depth questions linked to the respective themes to create a clear picture of the participant’s experience of the change from physical workplace to remote work. And further how this has affected their self-leadership, motivation, and self-efficacy. Additionally in what way the organizational goals have been presented. The interview questions have been composed in a way that offers the respondents to interact in the communication. The opportunity to ask follow-up questions has thus existed for us, and for the respondents. The order and outcome of the questions may consequently, to a minor extent, have differed from the interview template presented in the appendix. This can thus be connected to the previous explanation of semi-structured interviews (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315; Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 212).

4.7 Conduction of interviews

All interviews were conducted during a two-week period in April/May 2021. Due to the situation with the pandemic, no interviews were made physically face-to-face. Rather, two interviews were made on the phone and the other seven interviews were made on zoom. The length of the interviews varied depending on the information given by the respondent. Among the employees, the shortest interview was 30 minutes and the longest was 45 minutes. The variation in interview length among the leaders was 44 minutes to 62 minutes (see [Appendix 3](#)). Both of us were participating in the conducted interviews. All interviews were held in Swedish since the respondents were more comfortable in answering the questions in their native language. However, holding the interviews in another language than the language of writing never seemed to be an issue. This, since the respondents, got the possibility to read the empirical findings before the compilation of the thesis and claimed that they were correctly represented in the study. Thus the transition from Swedish to English never hindered the conduction of the empirical findings.

At the beginning of each interview, we started off by presenting ourselves and the aim of the study. We were keen to inform the respondents about the ethical aspects that we have taken into consideration for the execution of the interviews. As previously mentioned, we informed on anonymity and how we would present each respondent in the findings. This, in order to be transparent and to make the respondent feel comfortable on how their opinions and answers would be extracted. We also believe that the likelihood of getting honest answers increases with anonymity. This, since the respondents otherwise may angle their answers after what they believe that their colleagues or managers want to read. No respondent has further any knowledge of other participants in the study, which does not only lead to anonymity among public readers but also to other participants taking part in the thesis. We believe that anonymity also makes the result more objective to the reader. Contrary, if the participating individuals were mentioned by name or company, we believe that a reader that is familiar with any of the respondents may sympathize more with this respondent than with any other respondent in the study. By having a confidential approach and mentioning respondents with the name *employee X* or *leader X*, we believe that this risk is minimized.

Before initiating the first question, we asked the respondents if they agreed to us recording the interview. The presented reason for recording the interview was to increase the ability to rehearse the respondent's answer, to transcribe the content, and to evade taking notes during the interview. This thus allowed us to focus on the listening and to ask follow-up questions.

In all 9 conducted interviews, the respondents agreed to record the interview. When compliance was made, we started off with the first introductory questions.

Throughout the interviews, the focus was on following the interview guide that we had conducted and tested through a pilot interview. However, when not understanding an answer or when clarification was needed, we both took initiative to follow up on the answers. In some interviews, we desired to ask more following questions while in some interviews, the focus was mainly put on summarizing the answers in order to ensure that we had understood the information correctly. A challenge with having different lengths on the interview is that the longer interviews may contain more useful information and thus, the findings can be primarily based on the respondent that has given the longest answers. However, we believe that long interviews do not necessarily mean that all shared information is relevant. In addition, we believe that it is not necessarily beneficial for the result of the study to hinder the respondents to develop their answers. Moreover, in some of the interviews, the respondents could answer an upcoming question in an earlier phase of the interview. In these cases, we then eliminated the question from the interview guide in order not to repeat the question. As a conclusion, we let the respondent speak freely, as long as their answer was connected to any of the themes of the interview. The aim was further to ensure that each participating individual will get equal space in the chapter on findings.

4.8 Ethical considerations

The ethical principles of research mean that the participating respondents should not be harmed and that the researcher should conduct the study with deception (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 122). There are normally four different criteria that need to be taken into consideration when conducting research; *harming participants*, *lack of informed consent*, *invasion of privacy*, and *if deception is involved* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 128). Harming participants refers to the importance of not affecting the participating respondents in a negative way. Such harming could be to put the respondent carrier at risk or to cause stress or physical damage for the respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 128). In order to avoid the principle of harming respondents, it is essential that the researcher is carefully reflecting on what the process of collecting material will look like. The participant's needs and desires should further be taken into consideration in order to encounter conflicts with the participant's wishes (Midgley et al, 2013, p. 37). A major consideration with the ethical aspect of harming respondents is moreover the confidentiality of the study. This aspect is important to take into consideration in order to protect privacy, as well as the integrity among respondents (Kaiser, 2009, p. 1634). When deciding upon anonymity or not, negotiation has to be done with the individual participating in the study. If he or she wants to be anonymous, this desire should be fully respected (Cameron & Price, 2009, p. 124).

To minimize the risk of harming respondents in this study, we have prior to the initiation of interviews critically analyzed the process of collecting material in order to identify pitfalls or activities where respondents could be harmed. As an example, we have initially decided that all participants should be anonymous and that the process should be completely transparent to the participating respondents. In addition to that, we have taken the respondent's desires into consideration before initiating the interview. As an illustration, one of the respondents had a wish of conducting a secrecy agreement before the interview. We thus took the desire into consideration and fulfilled the respondent's wish, in order for him/her to feel confident about how the material would be processed. In addition, all participants in this study are independent of one another and no respondent will gain any knowledge on the other participants' identity. The individuals participating in the study will further not be in-depth

explained, which minimizes the risk of being traceable through presented information. By taking these actions, we believe that this study will meet the ethical standards of not harming any respondent.

The second criteria that need to be fulfilled in order to be ethical in the research are the lack of informed consent, which means that the participation should be entirely voluntary (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 133). The respondents should further be consistent with knowing that their participation can be discontinued at any time (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 34). To fulfill this criterion, we have informed the respondents on both voluntary participation as well the ability to cancel cooperation prior to the interviews. We have added, as previously mentioned, to be transparent with how the collected material will be processed and how the results will be presented. This, since transparency, is also an important aspect of the criteria of informed consent (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 133). Conclusively, we believe that by taking these actions, we have minimized the risk of uncertainties among the respondents and thus believe that this criterion is fulfilled.

The third ethical principle encompasses the respondent's integrity, *invasion of privacy*. Informed consent is thus an essential part of this aspect, which means that the researcher creates a detailed understanding of the respondents' inclusion, to the extent that the respondent gives permission to use their material in the research. However, situations may arise where the respondent, despite consent, chooses not to answer specific questions due to that they are perceived as too private or sensitive (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 136). To facilitate this risk, we have chosen to keep all respondents and their companies anonymous, to enable an in-depth analysis of their input as possible, and to create the conditions for them to remain completely transparent in their stories. However, it is important to point out that a researcher in advance cannot know which questions are perceived as offensive for the respondents. A solution can therefore be to create opportunities for the respondents to influence its participation to the extent that they themselves are comfortable with (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 136). We have thus enabled open questions, and participation in the communication, in order for the respondents to influence the questions. However, we still followed the predetermined themes, to enable a comparison between the different fall companies. All types of research can further involve intrusion into respondents' privacy, but by using methods of anonymity and confidentiality, that risk is reduced (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 136).

The criteria of deception occur when the researcher is presenting their study as something other than it really is. An illustration of such an issue is if the researchers are referring to their work as a study to examine small consultant firms when in reality, the study aims at getting inside information on a competitor's product or service (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 137). Since we have declared transparency and will be open to all respondents about the process, we do not consider this criterion to be a problem. To avoid issues on consent, the interviewers should further inform respondents if interviews or observations are being recorded or filmed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 137). In order to be able to regress to respondents' answers, we have recorded all interviews. However, prior to the interviews we asked for the respondents' consent. This, in order to avoid a conflict with the criteria of deception.

4.9 Method for analysis

Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 276) states that qualitative interviews should include an audio collection of the empirical material, with approval of the respondents, to enable transcription of the material. When all interviews were completed, we thus began transcription of the work, thus, a transfer from audio-collected material to writing (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 132). This

to find patterns in the material (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 276), and facilitate the analysis work. If we would have taken notes during the interviews, instead of recording them, the material would have been more difficult to analyze. This is because there is a difficulty in noting all the statements and important information provided by the respondents would thus have been missed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 481). When we finished transcribing the material, we continued the analysis process with coding. This, to simplify the material collected, by categorizing the content from the interviews. The content was thus categorized according to predetermined themes (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 136), and colors, to simplify the compilation of the empirics. As an example, information gathered on the topic of *self-leadership* was highlighted in red, while *self-efficacy* was highlighted in blue. By categorizing the material based on themes that we then analyzed, we conducted a thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 572).

When the processing of the empirical material was finished, we started the presentation of the collected empirical material. According to Nylén (2005, p. 13), the empirical presentation could be presented through different methods such as case descriptions, dramatizing or can be built on themes and categories. In this thesis, we chose to structure the chapter on empirical data after the themes that have permeated our study. This, in order to answer our proposed research question, but also to create a common thread through the chapters. However, since both leaders and employees were studied, we chose to separate their answers into two different chapters. This, to make it easier for the reader to locate the answers between the leaders and employees. We also separated leaders and employees due to the reason that each theme otherwise would be too ample. Another option that could have been chosen for presenting the empirical material is a case description of each organization studied. However, the risk with choosing such a method is that the empirical presentation would be very extensive and long. A major risk with a large-scale empirical chapter is further that the reader avoids reading the chapter (Nylén, 2005, p. 16). It would thus be devastating to the credibility of the research if the readers avoided reading the empirical material. Hence, conducting the empirical presentation after themes were considered a more suitable option.

In the analysis, we continued categorizing the chapter after the chosen themes: *self-leadership*, *motivation*, *goals*, and *self-efficacy*. This can, again, be connected to thematic analysis where the aim is to categorize the empirical material after certain themes (Vaismoradi et al. 2013, p. 400). The theme of remote work was not an independent theme of the analysis. Rather, remote work was interlinked into the other themes of the analysis to clearly link how the remote environment has affected self-leadership and its components. With a point of departure in this thematic analysis, the purpose was to compare the answers from the respondents within the different themes to find similarities and differences among them. The analysis was thus characterized by a comparative design, meaning that two or more cases are put in contrast to better understand a problem or phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 63). The empirical material was also analyzed in proportion to the previously presented theories. This, to show how the findings of this study differed or could confirm what other authors have depicted on the subject of the various themes. By using thematic analysis and integrating remote work into the different themes of the analysis, we believe that we have laid a solid ground to answer the research question in the following chapter on conclusions.

5. Empirical findings

This chapter entails information from the nine participants in this study. The chapter is divided into two sections, one for leaders and one for employees. This to feature similarities and differences in the presentation of the two target groups. The chapter accounts for how the participating organizations are managing self-leadership and its related components, motivation, goals, and self-efficacy under remote environments.

5.1 Empirical findings - leaders'

5.1.1 Presentation of respondents and their perception of remote work

“Leader A: CFO in the forestry industry”

Leader A has been working in the organization since 2006. The main responsibilities of the position include managing several departments such as economy, IT, and sustainability. The organization is described as decentralized, where responsibility and trust are placed on each individual. The organization consists of several different operations, where all parts are performed independently. However, the different operations of the organizations all share the same value system consisting of clear values, goal management, code of conduct and policies. The forestry company has, due to the new restrictions of the pandemic, changed their way of working and has gone from working in an office to working remotely. To facilitate work from home, digital resources such as Teams are used for meetings and Miro is used for workshops. Informal fika-meetings are also held on a weekly basis to enable possibilities for informal conversations. The perceived advantage of remote work is the ability to optimize time. However, leader A is expressing that the biggest challenge with remote work is the lack of social interactions, due to less spontaneous conversations with employees. It is also explained that leadership is challenging to perform under remote conditions. This, since physical encounters with employees do not occur, and communication becomes trickier. It thus makes it hard for the leader to, for e.g. noticing if the employees' mental health is decreasing. The forestry organization has not yet decided if remote work should be an option in the future. However, the leader states that there is an importance in continuing to give the employees flexibility to partly work remotely in order to be an attractive employer.

“Leader B: CEO in a technician and innovation organization“

Leader B is the CEO of a technician and innovation organization and has operated in the business for over 20 years. The organization is described as decentralized and the culture is characterized by inclusion, friendliness, and individual responsibility. Leader B is describing that the organization values all employees' uniqueness and no matter title, position, or who you are, all employees are respected equally. The company had, prior to the pandemic, a well-functioning way of operating the business through digital resources. This, since employees, is spread in several different countries. The digital resources have thus become essential in order to facilitate working globally in teams, but for now, also on a national level. The restrictions due to the pandemic have thus led to employees to a greater extent working remotely. Leader B is describing that a lot of focus is put on digital presence and that there is great importance in not only arranging business meetings but also meetings with the aim of talking about non-work subjects. This, to make the meetings more genuine, and to highlight the importance of having informal conversations in order to promote a coherent culture. The digital resources used in the organization are among others, Teams. The company has also arranged additional digital solutions such as weekly town halls where all employees meet, talk more informally, get business updates, and the possibility to ask questions. Leader B is describing that the advantage with remote work is that the employees are working more closely together now, due to the new creative ways of communicating internally. Leader B

describes that the employees are more synchronized now that they all meet on a weekly basis. However, the leader describes that digital solutions can never replace meeting physically, which is described as the biggest drawback of remote work. The organization will continue working in a similar manner after the pandemic, but more focus will be put on physical presence.

“Leader C: Consultant Manager”

Leader C has been working in the organization since 2013, and had prior to the employment a collaboration, as self-employed, with the company. Today, Leader C is a team leader for 20 consultants. The culture is described to be based on trust and psychological security. The organization's way of working has changed as an effect of covid-19. Primarily, the personnel are working almost completely remotely due to strict recommendations to work from home. The organization uses Zoom as the most common communication tool, but also another tool when broadcasting workshops. In this program, the participants can easily ask questions and the tool is described as fast and efficient. The positive aspects of remote work are described to be the sustainability perspective for people, the environment as well as entrepreneurship, based on reduced travel. It is also emphasized that digital meetings can be more efficient than physical ones, where those who participate become less social with each other and instead focus on the mission of meeting only. It is further explained that more topics have time to be addressed as employees become more focused on digital meetings. The challenges of remote work are connected to decreased social interactions, and Leader C states that relationship building is more successful when it happens face-to-face. Furthermore, many ideas are developed in physical meetings, which now ought to be more difficult. It is described to be complicated to ensure that all participants are focused on the meeting when it takes place digitally. In the future, the company will to a greater extent use a combination of office and homework.

“Leader D: Property manager”

Leader D has been working in the organization for the past 10 years, and now has the position as a property manager within administration. The culture in the organization is described as a common set of values, which has been developed by the group management. The business model is described as a horizontal management arrow, rather than a classic hierarchy, where the individual who works closest to the customer bears the ultimate responsibility. Leader D claims that they have established good conditions to work remotely, as the past year has included extensive work with improvement in IT systems and structures. At present, the majority of the personnel work from home as the recommendations are to work remotely. Like Leader C, Leader D's organization will continue to work remotely to varying degrees after the pandemic. Leader D asserts that reduced travel due to the pandemic can reduce stress. Furthermore, employees are less disturbed in their work when it happens digitally. On the other hand, informal meetings and problem-solving are explained to be more advantageous to be held physically and such meetings are perceived harder in a remote environment. Leader D states that efficiency has increased in the individual work, as the high focus is a requirement when working remotely. However, the efficiency of contact with colleagues has decreased because it takes longer to call or contact colleagues if questions arise than it takes to spontaneously ask one another questions in the office. The organization uses Teams as a communication channel, in all directions of the organization. The biggest challenge with remote work is, as previously mentioned, the lack of spontaneous meetings and discussions. The creativity promoted by sitting physically in the same office also decreases. Well-functioning IT systems are described as an important prerequisite for

well-functioning remote work. Leader D also believes that remote work can be well functioning as long as everyone exercises it.

5.1.2 Self-leadership

How the organizations are working with self-leadership differs. Leader B expresses that self-leadership is the basis of the organization and that the culture is based on taking responsibility and leading oneself. When onboarding new colleagues, the main focus is on self-leadership and on how to be a part of a high-performing team. Working in teams is further described as an important element of self-leadership, where the focus is put on agreeing within the team on what is important. Leader B describes their working method as “freedom within well-designed frames” and “freedom under responsibility”.

“The frame of a pool is stable, but everything within the pool is floating and dynamic.” - Leader B.

This metaphor is described to picture the organizational way of working, where all employees set their own role descriptions and where development and responsibility are up to each individual. Thus, the *how*, *why*, and *when* is determined by each individual.

Leader A describes that self-leadership is characterizing the organization. It is mentioned that the goal processes lay the basis for the exertion of self-leadership. The goal process exists in order to provide frames for the employees’ work. However, how the employees chooses to work within the frame is up to each individual. It is moreover described that no manager tells the employees what to do, and great responsibility is thus put on the individuals. Reconciliations are however regularly held, in order to facilitate support and to ensure that the work is going in the direction of the organization. The possibility of individually deciding how to work within the designed frames is described to increase participation as well as engagement. It is moreover explained that the employees decide *how* and *where* they want to work, and that freedom and responsibility are the core of each position. Leader A describes that the goal process, clearly defined structures, and culture of the organization is essential in order to know what is expected of each individual.

“ (...) When it comes to self-leadership, I would say that this goal process and the structure has been particularly valuable during remote work since everyone knows how to carry out their work.” - Leader A

Leader C describes that self-leadership is well implemented in the organization, and that remote work, as an effect of covid-19, has increased their already established work with self-leadership. The *mission model* is a basis for self-leadership and defines the organization. The model includes visions, goals, expectations, support, and resources in various organizational directions. In the organization, goals are defined together with the consultant, the customer, and the manager. As the consultants have direct contact with the customer, they also have the best conditions to steer the dialogue with the customer.

“Decisions must be made where the decisions fit best.” - Leader C.

Within the organization, employees have the flexibility to control their own work but are matched with customers who match their profile. The matching is based on competence, experience, but also according to life situation, for e.g if they have toddlers or are about to relocate. The employees can choose both *when* and *where* they work, as long as this is done

in consultation with the customer's needs.

Leader D describes that newly employed individuals have to go through an onboarding program of 2,5-3 days in self-leadership. The main focus of the onboarding is to lead oneself. In general, there are highly educated employees within the company, and there is thus an expectation and job description that presupposes independence. As in the case of Leader C, customers control the employees' working time. Given that the employee adapts to the customer, they have total control over their work. Personal profit plans are further developed in consultation with the manager. How to achieve these goals is up to the employee, with support from the management. The profit plan is followed up every 3/4 week in each team but is also fluid as the managers are available if employees want more support or dialogue. The organization is working closely and supportively with its employees. Discussions about support and individual operational parts are thus held with the employees several times a week. Leader D further describes that the focus of leadership is “supportively work”, where the manager acts as a supportive partner to the employees.

Leader D means that the employees are satisfied with their independence to control their own work. However, leader D mentions that independence can be challenging in the beginning and that the managers thus adapt situations responsibly and act more supportively in the initial phase of the employment. Leader C claims that the organization has reached its maximum potential when it comes to independently affect one's work and that they have a high degree of self-leadership. Since the customers are the main clients of the organization, Leader C focuses on follow-up with both customers and consultants and intervenes if something needs to change. An example of such a situation is if the consultant does not feel that the assignment is sufficiently challenging or developing. Adapting the client to the consultant's wishes, and the consultant to the client's wishes is described as successful. Leader B also expresses that there is no room for taking more responsibility in the organization and that the employees already have full control over their situation and work. Likewise, leader A mentions that the employees have expressed that they are satisfied with their ability to influence their own work and situation.

Leader C explains that opportunities for meetings vary, depending on the needs of the consultant. In more challenging assignments, the reconciliations between the manager and the consultant can be held more frequently, while in less demanding assignments, reconciliations are less frequent. To inform when meetings are needed, an internal means of communication is used where the employees can express the need for contact. Leader C explains that employees have expressed that they know that their immediate superior is always available if they need support or want to engage in dialogue. In addition to meetings, the organization also has digital fikas as an alternative to social interactions. These fikas take place every three weeks and participation is voluntary. Likewise, leader A explains that the frequency of meetings differs depending on what support the employee needs and that there is always a possibility to get assistance when needed. However, scheduled informal meetings like fika breaks take place multiple times every week. Leader D announces that reconciliations take place every 3 and 4 weeks with the employees, but that they also have conversations linked to the performance plans every week. Leader B instead has settled meetings in the organization where the teams meet on a daily basis and the sectors (several different teams) meet for meetings weekly. During these meetings, aspects such as workload and delegation of tasks is on the agenda.

When it comes to division of labor, the distribution looks similar in all studied organizations.

It is based on both competence and personality in the various organizations. According to leader B, division of labor is mainly drawn to the personality of the employee and what interplay you have with your team. Leader D states that it is also based on willingness and that the employees can cross-work, meaning that the employees can work with what they are motivated by, and good at, and thus not only have to work with their set role description. The employees' positions are thus dynamic and change in relation with both society and the customer, where conversations are held continuously about who wants and can perform the work that emerges. According to leader A, division of labor is likewise based on the willingness and on the employee's wish for development. Leader C additionally mentions accessibility as an added component to what the division of labor is based on.

In answer to the question if employees at the studied organizations receive any training in carrying out their work independently, the leaders respond differently. Leader C explains that those who work in the organization all have many years of working experience. They are thus used to manage their work independently from the start. The training they receive can be described as "learning by doing", where new employees learn the organization's way of working. In a similar way, self-leadership is rather not trained in leader A's organization. Instead, the focus is also on learning by doing. However, leader A emphasizes the importance of support from the leader to facilitate self-leadership among employees. Leader A says that without support from colleagues or leaders, a high level of independence can be rather stressful. The training given in Leader D's organization is the previously mentioned onboarding program, which is a requirement to undergo as a new employee. Likewise, in leader B's organization, training in self-leadership is the main focus during the onboarding process. Moreover, the training is facilitated, just like leader C's organization through learning by doing and also through learning by observing.

In the formal reconciliations of Leader D's organization, goals, progress, and deviations are reported in order to create a dialogue about what should be prioritized/changed in the future. In addition to these formal reconciliations, the organization has several informal reconciliations with each individual, where security and needs are discussed. Employee satisfaction is measured by an employee index every 18 months. In addition, employee surveys are conducted a few times per year. Leader D asserts that a lot of energy is spent on follow-up and well-being within the organization. The importance of employees' well-being is further discussed at joint meetings. Leader C explains that the sales department in the organization has reconciliations with the client and the consultant to see that the mission is working well. Surveys are further carried out for both consultants and the customers, in order to create an understanding of the assignment progresses. Employee surveys are conducted on three occasions per year to measure employee satisfaction. Leader C mentions that their results of the survey have been very positive. Likewise, the organization that leader A is operating within follows up on employee well-being every year. Well-being and goal reconciliations are also made through communication with the closest manager. In leader B's organization, employee surveys are made once a year. It is also the different team's responsibility to do smaller, more frequent employee surveys, preferably once a month or once a week. Moreover, it is up to each individual to raise questions regarding wellness and the leader explains that the top-down bottom-up communication facilitates communication on such topics. However, the management is continuously available and shows interest in supporting the employees in these dialogues.

When it comes to the leadership style, Leader A explains that it is characterized by freedom under responsibility and that the relationship with the employees is based on common trust.

Leader A further depicts that individuals within the team have a close relation to one another and that they genuinely care about each other. Leader B describes its leadership style as servant and characterized first by empathy, secondly by smartness, and lastly justification of organizational values. Leader B also mentions that successful leadership entails supporting and providing employees with clear conditions for managing their own work. Leader C describes its leadership style as trust-based, and that it creates psychological security. This includes close and clear communication about expectations and where the employees can find the manager when needed. Leader D describes its leadership style as situational and individual. An advantage mentioned in working with few close employees is that it enables this leadership style to be exercised. Leader D means that the team can maximize their performance based on what motivates the different individuals and what their strengths are, by practicing a situation- and individual-based style. In the organization, the individual is allowed to determine the level of the conversation, and thus the depth of the relationship between leader and employee.

"There are employees who talk about everything, but also employees who do not want to share their private lives. The relationship is cordial and we joke with each other (...) We mainly communicate on a professional level, as I feel that this is what the employees want. However, the relationship provides opportunities to talk about what you want." - Leader D

Leader C describes that the relationship between leaders and employees is characterized by a good and close relationship. Leader C justifies this by saying that it is extra important to have a continuous discussion when it is not possible to work close to each other on a regular basis. Like Leader D, Leader C believes that it is the employees who choose the level of the relationship based on how private they want to be. On the other hand, it is mentioned as important to also discuss the private situation with employees as it affects their professional performance. Leaders A and B have answered the question on relationship to employees in a similar way. They both mean that the relationship is not only characterized by business, but also by a climate that allows private talks and that people genuinely care for one another in the team.

The biggest challenge identified with self-leadership under remote conditions is, according to leader A, to facilitate the social relations in the team. Due to fewer social interactions, employees may feel less support from others and the contact with managers and employees may not be as genuine as physically in place. The solution to the challenge is described to use creativity to arrange other forms of social meetings such as walk and talks or fika breaks and to adapt to the situation. According to leader B, the biggest challenge is to have a clear social context. The context of communication is of specific importance and leader B highlights non-work communication as the biggest challenge. Thus, a "digital presence" with regular non-work meetings is presented as a solution to feel coherence.

"When you mention self-leadership, you mean the ability to shape your own working situation and freedom under responsibility. BUT, there are few individuals who are made to work entirely on their own. You always need a communication context and specifically non-work communication." - Leader B

Leader C describes that there have been challenges both mentally and physically with the changed way of working. The physical issues are solved by providing employees with

computer screens, keyboards, office chairs, etc., while the mental state of employees is harder to detect at a distance.

"The mental part may be more difficult to pay attention to, such as problems with motivation. We are in a state of involuntary isolation. We have it open on the agenda and talk about it. It is certainly not a matter of course that everyone enjoys working at home exclusively" - Leader C

Like leader A, leader D states that direct support to employees for developing their self-leadership is the biggest challenge with remote work. Leader D explains that there is a risk that the difficulty of support may contribute to reduced self-leadership. To counteract, the organization works with support and is available for all kinds of discussions. Even more often now in a remote environment, as social interactions are more difficult to occur spontaneously.

5.1.3 Motivation

The leaders explain that they are working with motivation in various ways. Leader A describes that motivation in the organization is mainly drawn to participation and controlling one's own situation. Being able to participate and control is explained to create engagement among individuals, which in turn enhances motivation. Leader A claims that strict working assignments with low opportunities for impact, contrary, decreases motivation. However, leader A clarifies that the transition to remote work has affected the motivation among employees in a somewhat negative manner. This, since the motivation, is highly affected by being inspired by other colleagues, which is challenging in a remote environment, where opportunities for interactions are limited. Leader B describes that motivation within the organization increases when the employees feel that their work matters and contributes with value to the organization. Leader B also enhances the importance of creating room for everyone's performance and to work in close connection to others. It is explained that the transition to remote work initially has affected the motivation of employees in the organization negatively due to fewer social interactions. However, the company has proactively worked with new ways of facilitating interaction. Leader B explains the previously presented "town halls" have been rewarding to facilitate such informal communication.

Leader C states that motivation is promoted through an employee promise: that the consultants should have the best time in their careers during their employment period. The matching process between consultant and customer is thus mentioned to be especially important, to enable this promise. The matching process is done through dialogue, where the consultants are able to express for e.g that they want more or less challenging assignments. The results from the employee survey in the company showed an increase in motivation since the remote work began. The reason for this is described by the organization's increased digital presence, which consequently has resulted in a closer relationship among the employees. Another reason explained for enhanced motivation is that the consultants may feel satisfaction to set up the work to an even greater extent on their own. Leader D describes that the employees have a high level of freedom in how to reach the common end goal. Leader D further asserts that working with creativity, quick and direct dialogue increases motivation and the feeling of being involved and influential. As the individual's opinions are taken into account when creating activities in consultation with their manager, motivation further increases. The previously presented cross-work is further called a solution. The roles of the employees are therefore described as dynamic and changeable. Unlike Leader C, Leader D describes that motivation seems to have diminished as a result of employees no

longer having the same contact with their customers and employees, and thus not being able to collect the same amount of energy from others. However, Leader D points out that the employees "see the light in the tunnel", and that the motivation is not totally diminished.

During the interviews with the leaders, we presented McClelland's theory of need that has permeated the team of motivation in this thesis. The leaders were asked to answer what their employees were mainly motivated by, from their understanding. Leader A perceives that achievement is created by humans in cooperation. This entails that all employees have certain expectations from internal and external stakeholders. However, achievement can never be performed all alone. Thus, social interaction and having a common goal are essential for achievement. Leader A thus concludes that achievement and affiliation are interdependent of one another to facilitate performance. Likewise, leader B mentions that a balance between task infinity and social influence is strongly connected to motivation. The need for power is something that leader B strongly dissociates from. Leader C states that social interactions are the driving force for the majority of the company's employees. This, because the employees repeatedly expressed a desire that they want to engage more together. The opportunities for meetings thus become valuable and a value-creating opportunity to connect and anchor with their colleagues within the company. Leader D can see all three factors for increased motivation in the organization, as they "with small adjustments can be connected to the company model". Some of the employees are analytical and results-oriented, some are forward and want to achieve goals and take control while some are focused on being empathic and care about relationships. Leader D thus asserts that the employees are found in all steps in the presented model.

5.1.4 Goal-theory

In leader B's organization, all employees have been involved in shaping the strategies of the organization as a whole. When the organizational strategy is established, goals are set by the employee, individually or the teams collectively. Leader B explains that reconciliation is then always made on an individual level as well as on a team level. However, in this organization, there is no focusing on strict reporting or follow-ups, since leader B means that this is characterizing a control-based organization. Rather, it is claimed that the employees know when they are doing a good job or when their performance needs to be improved, through self-insight. Leader A, instead describes that the organization has a clearly defined goal process and that the organization is working by the principle MBO (management by objective). In the goal process, expectations from the organization are clearly defined. However, it is up to each individual to decide what goal the employee wants to set in order to meet the expectations. The employee then gets the opportunity to set factors in order to know *what* is crucial for success. Different activities that the individuals want to undertake are formed in order to know *how* to reach their own set goals. Follow-up is then continuously made with managers. Leader A explains that this model permeates the whole organization from a management level to an individual level. It is also explained that this model and the freedom of setting own goals and activities lay the basis for self-leadership in the organization. The model is explained to be useful in a remote context in order for employees to know how to manage their own tasks.

Leader D depicts that goals are followed in the direction of the organization through the above-mentioned plans. The goals are thus followed up in the teams through developed tools and personal results. The manager is responsible but performs the follow-up in consultation with the employees. The management's expectations of the employees are discussed between managers. The goals to be met are also described as coming from an exchange at all levels in

the "leadership arrow". Leader D supports its employees in goal fulfillment by emphasizing that the goals should be challenging, positive, and give energy and that an unmet goal does not equal failure. Leader D states that there is a constant dialogue about the goals. If the business changes, so do the goals, which creates a requirement for continuous communication.

"What do we think is the highest priority? How can we work cross-functionally? Just because you are responsible for a goal does not mean that you should implement everything. It is a common misconception that if you are responsible, you should implement everything yourself. But being responsible for something being done and doing it is not necessarily the same thing." - Leader D

Leader C's organization has a continuous follow-up with both consultants and customers to see that the work proceeds as planned. This is mainly managed through surveys and continuous dialogue, where both customer satisfaction and consulting satisfaction are measured. In the organization, many consultants are explained to set personal goals for development in competence and profession. These goals are met 1-2 times a year when the consultant takes on a new assignment. Leader C explains that many consultants express that their development is steep in the organization, and include learning and understanding of the customer's current- and desired situation.

When asked if the leaders perceived that the employees are motivated or unmotivated by achieving difficult goals, the answers are similar. Leader D explains that most people in the organization are motivated and focused, but that there are situations where the manager has to rethink and act differently based on the individual's personality. Leader A explains that the employees can be motivated by difficult goals. However, it presupposes that colleagues, as well as managers, are available if support is needed. Otherwise, a lack of support may lead to decreased motivation. Leader C explains that the employees within the organization become motivated by difficult goals. Likewise, leader B explains that the employees within the organization are driven by achieving difficult goals.

"They see that it is a challenge, but then dare to give in to the tasks they feel insecure about. When they solve them, they grow in their doing and knowledge. They are constantly evolving in their profession which helps to maintain motivation and commitment. When the employees dare to be brave, they get appreciation from the customers. It will be a positive spiral that benefits us all." - Leader C

5.1.5 Self-efficacy

Leader C states that the employees have a belief in their own ability to perform tasks, and thus a high self-efficacy. Consultants have expressed that they receive a lot of support from their colleagues and managers to deliver. The organization further uses a channel where an ongoing dialogue provides the opportunity to ask questions linked to each person's assignments. Leader D claims that the organization's employees definitely have a high belief in their own ability. On the contrary, Leader A asserts that the level of ability to believe in oneself differs among the employees, where some individuals have no doubt in their own ability to perform tasks, while others have a lower level of self-efficacy. Leader B instead states that the self-efficacy in the organization is relatively low compared to what the employees actually perform.

If employee self-efficacy fluctuates, Leader C claims that support is the key to deal with the issue. As customers have high expectations, leader C states that it is important that the consultants feel that they dare to take on more challenging or new assignments. However, Leader C asserts that there are no answers on how to proceed in a situation of this character, but that one must work to find alternative solutions. Leader D responds similarly to Leader C to the question of how they support employees with lower self-efficacy. Leader D describes that dialogue and communication are of high importance to enable support. Both between manager and employee, and between employees. In a similar manner, leader A means that listening and supporting is the key factor to solve a situation where an employee's self-efficacy fluctuates. Thus, leader A mentions the importance of having such a relationship with the employees to be able to talk about rising challenges. The importance of individual-based leadership is also depicted in order to adapt to each individual and situation. Leader B means that it is the role of the manager to make the employees feel comfortable in their position and to confirm that they are doing a good job. It is further explained that when establishing self-leadership among employees, the focus is put on settling a feeling that each individual owns his/her own performance, while the organization is there for support. Leader B explains that the environment, leadership, as well as structure of the organization, creates a culture where support is always available.

“We do not just drop you in the pool to see if you can swim. We have a structure to support the employees. If someone is lost then we say “you can influence everything. Who's stopping you?” It's about feedback, culture and showing that your performance pays off.” - Leader B

5.2 Empirical findings - employees

5.2.1 Presentation of respondents and their perception of remote work

“Employee A: Service contract administrator in the vehicle industry”

Employee A is responsible for the operative work at a vehicle company. The employee has been working in the current role since September 2020 and the main tasks are to administer contracts, customer service, and invoice customers. Employee A was working in the office until December 2020 and has since then been managing all work from home. Remote work is explained to be perceived as more effective since the risk of getting interrupted is more likely to occur in an office. However, the biggest drawback is explained to be that the social contact with colleagues suffers. Essential information that normally occurs in informal conversations is now impaired since the colleagues cannot communicate in a similar manner as prior to the remote work. Another drawback with working from home is the lack of comfort to ask colleagues questions since it requires a digital meeting or a phone call. To facilitate remote work, this company is using the communication platform Teams for scheduled calls with the employees. Remote work will moreover be an option even after the pandemic for the vehicle company, since the employees, as well as the managers of the company, are perceiving the work to be equally effective as when working in the office.

“Employee B: University lecturer”

Employee B is a university lecturer and has worked at the university since 2017. Before the pandemic, the employees had the opportunity to control their work freely in terms of work schedule and working hours. The biggest difference at present is that the work takes place almost entirely at a distance. This, as the employer, has advocated for the employees to work from home to the greatest extent possible. Teaching is moreover performed digitally, which previously were made physically at the university. Working at a distance has resulted in difficulty in making quick decisions or asking questions to colleagues. It also complicates the

knowledge of who to contact in specific issues. The lack of spontaneity that usually occurs in the “corridor” results in questions or conversation being avoided because the contact is harder to facilitate remotely. The lack of social contact with colleagues is also presented as a major disadvantage with remote work. However, remote work has brought the possibility to make decisions individually, without asking the co-workers. It has also affected the change of thoughts, where the realization that there is a better quality of certain things online, while some are better in place occurs. Communication channels that were already implemented in the organization are still used, such as emails and meetings via teams. Phone calls have increased, and teaching takes place via Zoom, which is the communication channel that has increased the most in usage. After covid-19, the perception is that the employees will have the same opportunity to set up their work freely and that more people will work from home, due to the fact that it has proved to work well during the pandemic. The focus will be on how the employees want to shape their work individually.

“Employee C: Audit associate in financial consulting”

Employee C is working as an audit associate and has been working in the position since 2019. The employee is mainly responsible for conducting and auditing financial reports for different companies. The company that employee C is working within has completely changed its way of performing the work due to the pandemic. Prior to March 2020, all employees were working from the physical office. Employee C explained that the work has always been flexible, but it has not been accepted to be permanently stationed from home prior to the pandemic. However, in today's situation, almost all employees are working remotely. To facilitate remote work, the company is primarily using Teams for communicating internally and externally. Employee C explains that a consequence of remote work is that communication failures often occur and it is sometimes a challenge to know what is expected from oneself, especially in bigger teams including more individuals. Another drawback explained is that informal talk and social relations is suffering due to working at a distance from colleagues. The employee also mentions that communication is displayed more naturally when working in the same office. However, the major advantage explained with working remotely is time-saving.

“Employee D: Educational support in vocational education”

Employee D is working with educational support for students within vocational education and has been working in the company since early 2020. Prior to march 2020, some of the meetings within the organization were held remotely. However, owing to the pandemic, all work is now performed remotely. Thus, all contact with students as well as internal meetings is done through different digital resources, such as google meet. Employee D explains that the major advantage of working remotely is the possibility to independently structure the days. Employee D perceives oneself to be more effective when working from home since it reduces the risk of being interrupted. However, the major drawback is that social interaction cannot be performed in the same way through digital resources when compared to interaction face-to-face. After the pandemic, all employees will have the possibility to continue working from home, since working remotely is explained to streamline their work.

“Employee E: School motivator and project manager in entrepreneurship”

Employee E is a School Inspirer and project manager in entrepreneurship, and has worked in the organization since 2018. As a result of the pandemic, the organization has changed its way of working in numerous ways. For example, the organization projects an annual national exhibition, which has been carried out digitally after the start of the pandemic. The exhibition thus became an e-week, where inspirers gathered, participated in lectures, created a bigger

network, and met people from different parts of Sweden. Thus, what is usually done live in large premises has completely changed to be accomplished by digital solutions. The employees meet when the live productions are carried out, but work entirely from home and have all meetings digitally, in addition to the live broadcasts. Teams are mainly used as the communication channel between employees, but Zoom is utilized when students are involved, as it is said to be an easier tool when more people are participating. As an advantage of working remotely, the organization can reach out to more municipalities and students, where fairly personal contact is created. Counseling and coaching have thus been improved, but also the mediation of contacts. The remote work has also saved time on, among other things, travel since meetings now can be carried out digitally. The biggest disadvantage is mentioned to be the dependence on social contacts. The organization has previously only had physical meetings and events, which required them to change, which in turn was perceived as difficult. However, the organization is described as innovative and optimistic, where they have realized that work has improved and jobs have increased as a result of more ideas being born when working remotely. After the pandemic, the flexibility in *when* and *where* the work is carried out will remain. Certain meetings will change to physical on-site, but the digital presence will remain.

5.2.2 Self-leadership

Self-leadership is present in all organizations studied according to the respondents. However, *what*, *where*, and *when* the respondents individually can affect their work looks different in the various organizations. Employee B and Employee D plan their working methods completely independently, without the influence of others in the organization. Whilst Employee A, C, and E are dependent on team members to complete tasks. Although they work in teams, and closely with colleagues, self-leadership is present. The three respondents described that the team jointly agrees on the division of labor and goals and that the individual then has the responsibility to independently manage the agreed tasks.

“When working in a team, you certainly must agree with other members on the division of tasks. In the teams I am working within, we decide on a deadline, but how you get there is up to yourself.” - Employee C

An important prerequisite for promoting self-leadership in remote teams is mentioned to be regular meetings. The three respondents who most often work in groups, all mention that they have at least one meeting per day with closest colleagues. This through the digital resources that the organizations provide the employees with, such as Teams, Zoom, and Google meet. Employee C mentioned that depending on the current team, meetings are more or less frequent. However, the intention is to have teams meeting at least once a day in order to simplify communication. Further, these meetings are mentioned as a critical success factor in teamwork under digital conditions. This, because it is essential for well-functioning communications and for maintaining team affiliation. Employee A and C mention that these meetings are crucial to know what is expected of them, and what types of tasks that are essential to perform.

“I think it is important to have daily meetings. If you have no opportunities for meetings, it would be challenging to know what to do and how others progress. Communication is essential, even if you cannot meet face-to-face.” - Employee A

In comparison to employees A, C, and E, employees B and D have less frequent meetings. Employee B has monthly meetings with the entire staff group and meetings every week with

the other course coordinators. Employee D has meetings for planning the work tasks twice a week with all colleagues. Employee E additionally describes that there is an importance in talking about other subjects than work-related issues at the daily meetings, as ideas are raised during these conversations.

Each employee states that they have a close relationship with their immediate superior, who they can contact in case of having questions or need someone to talk to. How the relationships are displayed with remaining employees differs. Employees A and E state that they have a close relationship with their colleagues, talk frequently, and feel comfortable in discussing private as well as non-private related topics. Employee C asserts that the team has a good relationship, but that the social and “private” talk is deficient when it does not happen spontaneously and physically in place. Employee B talks less frequently with their colleagues in contrast to the other respondents, even if the relationship is described as good. Employee D states that the relationships within the organization are only work-related, and as employee C, that the spontaneous and social talk has suffered as a consequence of the remote work.

Employees A and E mention that work efficiency has increased due to the transition from office work to remote. Their responsibility for affecting their work methods has thus not increased in amount, but *where* and *when* they carry out their work has. However, employee E mentioned that increased efficiency in fact has led to a higher workload, as the employees individually control their work time. The organization has thus observed this phenomenon and given employees time off when they have exceeded the required working amount. Employee C agrees and mentions that the organization also notices overtime and communicates the importance of work-life balance to the employees. The biggest difference that employee D mentions, is that the work has shifted from partial remote work to being full-time remote. Employee B agrees with employee D’s statement but adds that independent decisions have increased in line with the change. None of the examined respondents have mentioned a need or a wish to increase the possibility to work more independently. This, since the respondents, are mentioning that they already have full control over their work.

“It is not possible to increase our independent work. I am responsible for my own projects and delegates tasks within them. My superior does not put that much effort into my projects, but trusts that I do the best in the role I have.” - Employee E

The respondents have different opinions on what is making self-leadership successful under digital conditions. Employee A mentioned that daily meetings are crucial, while employee C mentioned that reconciliations and deadlines are essential in order to perform on an independent basis. Employee B narrates that self-leadership is a basis in the organization and that prerequisites for independent work are already implemented. However, the employee considers development work as important at present, to keep up the pace with digitalization, for example through training. Further, the digital resources' range of tools can evolve, adapt better to what the profession needs. Employee E agrees with an increased focus on technological development, to make it easier for employees to locate through digital tools, but also claims that the organization is based on enabling self-leadership through total control over one's own work. Foreseeing, however, is mentioned as an important prerequisite for self-leadership during remote work to be successful. This, to make sure that the organization and those involved are prepared for what is about to happen and how to handle new situations. Employee D is explaining that communication between employees as well as clear division of tasks is necessary to perform under digital conditions. This, in order to increase the knowledge of one’s responsibilities. Lastly, training in self-leadership is explained to be

wanted by employees C and D, which means that it would be an advantage to get trained in how to carry out their own work when working remotely.

The division of work assignments is distributed differently in the organizations. All respondents are mentioning competence as an important component in the division of responsibilities and tasks. However, employees A, C, D, and E mentioned personality as an equal component to deciding responsibility level, meaning that employees that take initiatives, mostly are given more responsibility. Employee B means that competence is the major component in delegating responsibilities, but that personality also plays a role when it comes to delegating charge to employees on the same hierarchy level. Employee D also mentioned time as an important component. Thus, employees with time to spare are the ones given responsibility when tasks arise.

The employees examined in the study explain different leadership styles characterizing their leaders. Employee A and D explains that their closest leader is practicing freedom under responsibility, which means that these leaders put trust and faith in their employees to independently perform their work. Similarly, employee E mentions that the closest leader has a delegating leadership style that also involves trust and faith to a large extent. Contrary, employee C explains that the style characterizing the leader is more directive and pushing, which the employees perceived as somewhat motivating to perform better. In contrast to the other respondents, employee B mentions that the style of the closest leader does not affect their daily work. However, they have the possibility to communicate with their closest leader if necessary, as the leader is available when needed.

5.2.3 Motivation

In the question of how the organizations work with motivation, and how the respondents motivate themselves, the answers differ. Employee B experiences that the organization's trust in subordinates to control their own work tasks increases motivation. To be involved and influence the individual work is depicted to enhance motivation. This employee uses open communication and feedback from its students to increase the quality of the courses where the employee is involved, in order to motivate oneself. Employee E describes that the foremost motivation originates from the inspiring colleagues around, where motivation increases when seeing others develop.

“We really get to see development up close and I feel very proud that we create conditions for young people to dare to believe in their ideas and abilities. I think that's the biggest way to get motivation in our organization.” - Employee E

Employee E is motivated by spending time engaging in entrepreneurship and taking part in others' successes. Furthermore, developing relationships with partners, which creates an understanding of how important one's work is. Employee A continues on the same path and claims that it is primarily the individuals in the working group who motivate each other, rather than the company. The employee mentions that if the group would not have been as self-sufficient, there may have been a need for the organization to interfere to increase their motivation. Employee C explains that the organization has clear stages for development where the employee goes from being *junior* to *senior*, to *manager*. What lays as a basis for development is described to be a clear motivation for development and performance. Employee D, on the other hand, does not perceive that the company motivates its employees, nor that it is simple to motivate oneself. The organization is at present in procurement which can lead to continued or terminated employment, which is according to employee D a

motivator to perform. Foremost to affect their own assurance.

During the interviews with each respondent, we presented McClelland's theory of needs and asked the respondents to name the one component that they are primarily motivated by. Employees A, B, and C mention that *performance* best describes their motivation and that their motivation increases when they are able to perform tasks of a difficult nature. Employees D and E, on the other hand, describe that they are most motivated by *social interactions*. Employee D states that the reason for sufficient motivation is because the social interactions have suffered during the pandemic. Employee E describes that the motivation has both increased and decreased on various occasions. Motivation has decreased when it comes to the need for social contact, which has become deficient, but, the work has changed and more tasks and challenges have arisen that have increased motivation. Employees C and D assert that motivation has decreased, due to the lack of social contacts. Employee B means that the motivation has increased as a result of the distance work and increased responsibility. Employee A does not feel any difference in motivation before and after the transition to remote work.

5.2.4 Goal-setting

When it comes to follow-up, the organizations have different ways of measuring goal-fulfillment. In employee B's situation, evaluations are carried out by students, where the managers take part and follow up the evaluation results with the employees. The evaluations occur after each course and completion of the program. Employee E explains that a project manager evaluates and follows up the employees' work, where the project manager agrees with the working group if they have met the goals they set together or not. In the case of employee A, it is measured whether the goals have been achieved by analyzing statistics once a month by the immediate superior. Employee C mentions that it is the closest manager, customer manager, and group manager who follow up if the goals have been achieved. This follow-up is explained to be done via teams. Even in the case of employee D, the immediate manager follows up that the goals have been achieved. Employee B describes that the organizational goals are clearly stated and that the employees have total freedom in creating new ideas or projects.

"If I want to start or take part in a project, or initiate research, I can just do it! There are great opportunities to achieve personal goals." - Employee B

Employee E agrees and states that the employees know what is expected of them from the company and that there are a lot of opportunities to influence their own development and meet personal goals. Furthermore, employee C claims that it is clear what they ought to achieve, but mostly in consultation with the customer, as goals and achievements are often set in negotiation with the manager. Employee A instead asserts that it is up to each individual to strive to achieve goals, as this is not specifically stated by the company. Employee C states that it is very clear what is expected of the employees, and what goals the organization aims to achieve. Furthermore, there is a great opportunity for personal development. A feedback system is used in this organization.

"We are judged on six different criteria, such as leadership, how we are towards customers and quality in work. (...) Depending on what goal you have, you can take courses to increase your knowledge. We arrange many accounting courses. You can also work with the development yourself, and get help from your immediate

manager." - Employee C

Employee D states that the organizational goals are unclear and that it is just implied that everyone does their best. The organization has not communicated keywords or visions to the employees, which is described as wanted. The same employee asserts that it is difficult to set individual goals. On the other hand, this employee states that there is always support and help available within the organization. Remaining employees all state that they can find support from their managers and colleagues if they get stuck in their work. Employee B explains that it is hard to motivate oneself with difficult goals if it is not within a subject that is specifically of interest. Employee E agrees and claims that the difficult task must be perceived as reasonable in order to create motivation. Employees A and C both assert that they are motivated by tasks of a more difficult nature, but that the goals must be reasonable. Thus, it is only employee D who states that difficult tasks lead to low motivation, but the same respondent also claims that the motivation may appear after the task has been clarified.

5.2.5 Self-efficacy

Employees A, B, and E feel that they have a belief in their own ability to achieve goals.

"Every time I feel I'm not going to make it, I do it anyway. I'm not afraid to take help, and I think that's important. But I still think that you need to have a strong belief in your own ability" - Employee A

Employee C perceives a belief in its own ability but explains that it is difficult to know how to do tasks and know where to turn initially in the team. However, when you have worked for a while, you are more familiar with the structure of the team and it is easier to identify the competence among colleagues and to know where to turn if questions arise. Employee D expresses that the belief in one's own ability to perform tasks is not prominent and that the reason why is mainly linked to their own perceived self-image. The employee has a relatively low belief in oneself but describes that there is support to increase the belief in one's own ability when needed.

Employee A is instead challenged by managers to perform more difficult tasks and thus increases its self-efficacy. Employee C also states that support is available from his immediate superior through feedback and meetings. However, it is certainly up to oneself to raise such questions with the manager. Employee B claims that support for boosting self-efficacy is mainly received through colleagues, while employee E asserts that support comes from various people in the organization. Further, there are opportunities to test ideas that arise, which is a contributing factor to the boost of belief in one's own performance.

Employee B experiences a positive feeling of achieving goals and that it contributes to a good mood. Employee E instead explains it as positive exhaustion, as that it has been time- and energy-consuming. Employees A and C become motivated by achieving goals. Employee D feels satisfied and proud.

"We put so much heart and soul into everything we do, which can sometimes be exaggerated. I think that is also why people want to work at our organization because they feel that the job is important. We could be better at enjoying ourselves, as well as the projects we do". - Employee E

6. Analysis

This chapter presents a comparative analysis between the case companies. This to clarify differences and similarities on how Swedish organizations manage self-leadership in a remote environment. The purpose of this chapter is moreover to analyze the empirical findings with the theories that are previously presented in the study.

6.1 Self-leadership

Respective employees and leaders state that self-leadership is present in the organization. The expression of self-leadership however differs when comparing the respondents' answers. For all nine respondents, *how* and *where* the work is carried out is flexible and decided by each individual. Yet, *when* the respondents work varies. For one of the leaders and two of the employees, time is set by the individual oneself. For the other respondents, factors such as working in teams control when the employee needs to work. It can further be linked to set working hours in the organization, or that time is controlled by the customer. Perry et al., (2018, p. 579) mention that autonomy and taking control of one's own situation in remote work is mainly linked to deciding *where* to work. Choudhury (2020, p. 655) further presents that geographic flexibility can increase while working remotely. In addition to confirming previous research saying that remote work can increase individuals' responsibility for *where* they work, the analysis of this study has shown that control of one's own situation in remote work is also linked to *how* and, and in some situations *when*. Moreover, the advantage expressed with remote work in this study is that it facilitates controlling one's own situation to a greater extent than working physically on site. Similarly, Moretti et al (2020, p. 15) highlighted that greater control and autonomy is a likely outcome when working remotely. In one of the leaders' organizations, employees are not only able to control their individual assignments but are also involved in forming the organizational strategies. Thus, this creates a perception that the organization has a close collaboration between leaders and employees, which facilitates goal fulfillment essential for the performance of self-management (Dubrin, 2015, p. 28).

The nine studied organizations all use digital solutions, but with different main purposes. On the one hand, to facilitate understanding of the work and the division of labor. On the other hand, to strengthen cohesion and enable informal conversations. The channels that are mainly recurring are Teams and Zoom, where the former is mostly used in meetings of a smaller nature and the latter when more participants are involved. To manage self-leadership, frequent meetings are termed a success factor by both employees and leaders. However, meetings take place at different frequencies in the studied organizations. Four of the respondents state that meetings take place daily, three of the respondents that they take place weekly, and the remaining two that the frequency of meetings is based on need. Oakley (1999, p. 5) mentions that remote work creates a requirement for well-functioning communication structures and processes, which the collected empirical data also confirms. The respective respondents have emphasized the importance of regular and recurring communication, especially when it takes place remotely, as informal conversations or discussions no longer arise as a result of reduced physical presence. Moreover, we can confirm Moretti et al. (2020, p. 1) who states that remote work can generate lower levels of stress, as one of the leaders mentioned that e.g. less frequent traveling can decrease stress levels. However, it has been mentioned by another leader that self-leadership in a remote environment comes with a great amount of responsibility. If not getting support in how to control one's own situation in a remote environment, stress instead intends to increase. According to all respondents, support is an important component for managing self-leadership while working remotely. One of the leaders even explains that a lack of

support may negatively result in reduced self-leadership among employees. Thus, the empirical findings of this study definitely enhance the importance of having available support to independently manage one's own work.

When it comes to relationships, two of the employees agree that the nature of relationships with other employees has changed as a result of covid-19, and its requirements of working remotely. This, as spontaneous informal meetings no longer occur. Two other employees state that their relationships with other colleagues are equal to prior to the pandemic situation, and that digitalization has not changed the nature of their relationship with other employees. The last employee claims that the contact with employees is rarely recurring, but that the relationship is still expressed to be good. The complexity of working remotely referred to by Barsness & Diekmann (2005, p. 403) is the managerial relationship between leader and employee. This, by the explanation that subordinates are less controlled, observed, and cannot be steered in the same way. Yet, all employees in this study mention that the relationship with their immediate manager is good and that they can turn to their manager when they need help or support. What we have seen from our collected empirical findings is that self-leadership actually promotes independent control and thus reduces the need for managerial control. Instead, regular follow-ups are used to ensure that employees work in the right direction and have the right support and resources to successfully carry out their work. We have thus shown that the relationship between leaders and employees has changed, as the working conditions have transformed from physical site to remote, where an increased level of self-leadership follows as a result. This can further be linked to Perry et al., (2018, p. 579), who describe that autonomy and being independent is an essential mechanism in order to facilitate successful work in a remote environment.

Respective leaders further summarize the relationships with their employees as upright. In conclusion, the collection of empirical material shows that good relationships are a prerequisite for self-leadership in remote environments, both from the point of view of employees and leaders. This is because good relationships promote the support function, which in turn is described by the respondents as extremely necessary to promote self-leadership. This can thus confirm Dolbier et al., (2001, p. 480) statement, that relationships facilitate the pursuance of self-leadership. None of the respondents surveyed stated a need for increased control over independent work, as they are 'already as independent as they can be'. The leaders also confirm this by saying that they have not received any feedback from employees wanting to increase their independent work. On the contrary, they have expressed gratitude for the level of control they have today. Individual motivation and performance may thus have increased in the organizations. This, unlike if the level of self-leadership was perceived as deficient or unappreciated by leaders and/or employees. Additionally, our view is that the leaders of the surveyed case companies have managed self-leadership based on the employees' individual competence and commitment (Dubrin, 2015, p. 28).

Each respondent has expressed that the level of independent work is high, while the possibility of support from leaders is adequate. However, when the level of self-leadership increases in organizations, there is an importance in making sure that the support function is parallelly increasing. This is because the relationship between managers and employees in a remote context is characterized by a great deal of trust (Barsness & Diekmann, 2005, p. 403). This depicts the managers' confidence that the employees perform their duties in line with the organization, and also increases the employees' trust in the company (Robbins et.al, 2010, p. 152). This can be attributed to the respondent's belief that the more the employees are

allowed to be part of decision-making and designing their own tasks promotes trust, and creates an environment characterized by self-leadership and support, rather than control by the management. This information thus contradicts the previous theory presented by Barsness & Diekmann (2005, p. 403), that work in remote environments presupposes that employees need high self-assertiveness and can motivate themselves to perform tasks, without extensive support from the management board. Our presented findings rather show that individually controlled work is pursued better when the employees have available support from the management. Once again, the empirical material of this thesis has shown the importance of support in a remote environment characterized by self-leadership.

According to Dolbier et al., (2001, p. 480), it is furthermore essential for a well-functioning self-leadership to have a strong culture in the organization. This can be linked to the empirical findings of this thesis, where specifically two of the leaders mentioned that it is because of a clearly defined culture that employees know how to work in line with the organization. Factors such as visions, values, and policies are explained as key success factors for a transparent culture. On the contrary, one of the employees has expressed that the culture and values in the organization are not clearly defined, and are rather implied. This has led to difficulty knowing what goals to aim for, and to create personal objectives within the organization. The same employee also expressed a wish to have a more defined culture. This case strengthens the dynamics that was presented in the introductory chapter of this essay, that a clearly defined culture contributes to the promotion of self-leadership (Brach et al., 2017, p. 126) And as we have shown here, a weak culture makes it difficult to practice self-leadership, but also to understand internal goal fulfillment.

A previously presented definition of self-leadership is the ability to control one's own situation and work on an independent basis (Dubrin, 2015, p. 1). However, the empirical findings of this thesis show that far from all individuals are comfortable working completely individually. One of the leaders even expressed that 'few individuals are capable of working completely independently. Thus, there is an importance of creating a social context when working remotely, to increase the management of self-leadership. Especially as all participating respondents have expressed that social interactions are one of the main challenges working in a remote environment. It is consequently important to identify solutions for increased socialization, as it is described to not happen spontaneously when not being physically in an office. The presented solutions that the different organizations have implemented are walk-and-talks, Fika breaks as well as "town-halls", where employees gather not only to talk about job-related topics but also about non-work topics. This can be connected to earlier presented information from Acquah (2017, p. 13), that individuals are more likely to feel satisfied in a social environment. According to one of the employees, opportunities for social interaction can also decrease the risk of communication failures. Thus, the empirical findings of this thesis depict a strong relevance of a social context. Not least in a challenging context such as this one, where work and interactions take place at a distance.

Based on the empirical findings, there is a clear common thread in how employees describe their leaders' leadership and how leaders describe their own leadership. According to the leaders, trust, support and empathy are mentioned as the most important functions for successful leadership. This type of leadership style is described to promote continuous communication, which provides answers to what the employees are motivated by, what they want to work with, and what support they need from management and colleagues. It also creates an understanding for the employees, which can generate increased performance if

they receive the support that is requested and/or observed as needed. A situation- and individual-based style is thus termed to promote well-functioning leadership from various leaders. Further, clear communication structures and support functions are necessary to enable self-leadership in organizations performing remote work. The employees explain that freedom under responsibility is common, based on the fact that there is a clear trust from management to the employees, and that the leader has given the individuals control over how their tasks are performed. Although, respective employees mentioned that support is always available when needed. In conclusion, leaders can be described as empowering. This, as the leaders are sharing power, authority, and responsibility with their followers (Dubrin, 2015, p. 217). One respondent in this study however mentioned that their leader was 'directive and pushy' to increase the performance of the employees. This was thought to be positive, based on the will and needs of the working group and the individual. This thus confirms the previously presented theory by Yun et al., (2006, p. 376), that leaders affect self-leadership in a positive or negative way depending on their way of leading the follower. It is thus the leader's responsibility to ensure that individuals and groups are handled in their preferred way, to meet different employees' needs and thus maximize the facilitation of self-leadership in the organization.

In the same way, based on the empirical findings, it is up to the leader to create conditions for organizational training when needed. It is also clear that in a context characterized by self-leadership, that employees have responsibility for expressing a need or desire for education or training. Once again, for support and communication, it is extremely important that the management is responsive and creates structures for enabling dialogue. Which in turn promotes the employees' opportunity and willingness to contribute with their opinions and suggestions. Neck and Manz (1996, p. 460), explain that there is a dynamic relationship between training and self-leadership, where employees who undergo self-leadership training gain increased performance, enthusiasm, and satisfaction in the workplace. However, based on the findings of this study, there may not be a dynamic relationship between training and self-leadership, but rather an affecting relation. Two of the participating employees in this study believed that training could have positively affected their management of self-leadership during remote work. The remaining employees did not present a need or desire for training to increase the handling of managing their independent work. One of the leader's responses was that new employees have a requirement to complete a 2.5-3-day onboarding process with a focus on leading themselves. Thus, the organization has ensured that all employees receive the same training in the field, and factors that Neck and Manz (1996, p. 460) mention, may possibly increase as a result.

However, two of the examining leaders in this study expressed that practicing self-leadership is a prerequisite for being employed in the organization. Thus, it is comprehensible that training for self-leadership is not essential. Although, our empirical findings do not confirm that there is a dynamic relationship between training and self-leadership. Rather that training can be an influencing factor in managing self-leadership. What is important to remember is that the majority of the respondents stated that they developed their self-leadership skills through learning by doing and learning by observing, which can be perceived as one type of training. It is thus relevant to separate the theory's explanation of training, which is rather associated with planned activities, and everyday learning, which has been presented by the respondents as a way of developing self-leadership.

6.2 Motivation

How the organization works to promote and enhance motivation differs. Two leaders and one employee depicts that motivation is drawn to the ability to be able to influence one's own situation and that motivation increases when the individual feels that he or she contributes with value to the organization. Two other employees describe that motivation increases when working in close connection to inspiring individuals. The remaining employees and leaders describe that their organizations are working with motivation by methods such as enabling creativity, direct dialogues, and by opportunities for development. There is only one respondent that expresses a lack of motivation within the organization. Overall, the majority of respondents claim that individual motivation increases in connection with social interactions, and control over individual work. The individual that expresses a lack of motivation explains to have control over individual work, but that the social interactions are deficient. Our analysis thus depicts that self-leadership not only includes increasing the level of control over an individual's own work but also that factors for individual motivation are extremely relevant to include in order to facilitate eminent self-management.

Three of four leaders stated that the individual motivation decreased as a result of covid-19 and its demands on remote work. However, these leaders state that individual motivation increased after adapting to the new ways of working. This is due to the fact that the organization has adopted different solutions to increase motivation. One of the employees agrees that motivation decreased from the start, but increased in line with the adaptation to the new way of working. Another employee further states that increased control, thus self-leadership, over the individual work has positively affected their motivation. In the same direction, another employee claims that motivation has increased as a result of added freedom and control over independent work, where creativity has been more eminent. The fourth leader explains that the organization's employee surveys show an increase in employee motivation since changing to remote work. This leader motivates the increased motivation as a result of the enhancement of the organization's digital presence. Two of the employees state that the motivation only has decreased, and one of the employees asserts that it is the same as prior to the change to remote work. In summary, the new digital way of working does not necessarily mean that motivation decreases. Although, there is a risk that it does (Purwato et.al, 2020, p. 6240). The collected empirical evidence has thus shown that an increase in self-leadership, even at distance, can help increase individual motivation. However, the organizational context has to be adapted to the individual's needs and wants, such as level of control and support, as well as factors for motivation.

When presenting McClelland's theory of needs, input from the respondents varied. Three of the employees mean that achievement (nAch) is the key factor to increased motivation. The remaining two employees instead mean that they are motivated by social interaction (nAff), which is also confirmed by one of the leaders. However, two of the leaders mentioned that social interaction is necessary for the employees to achieve or to perform. Thus, these two leaders explain a dynamic relationship between the need for achievement and the need for affiliation. The remaining leader mentioned that all factors influence the motivation among their employees, and thus that no conclusion of an overall result can be drawn. Conclusively, this leader is the only respondent that has mentioned power (nPow) as a need for motivation in the studied organizations. Osemeke & Adegboyega (2017, p. 170) mentioned that leaders should provide a balance between *all* three needs in order to enhance motivation. Rather, it has been shown that the majority of the respondents in this study are motivated by either affiliation or achievement and that power is absent among the answers. However, it can be argued that the absence of power among the answers is mainly drawn to the presence of

self-leadership culture in the studied organizations and that power is not enforced on individuals in the organization, instead, the individuals have power over themselves and their own performance. However, the content presented in the *theory of needs* can be confirmed with the collected empirical findings, that motivational factors are individual and derived from each individuals' own preferences. Although, an interesting aspect worth highlighting in the analysis is that one of the employees who stated that social interactions (nAff) mainly increases motivation also stated a lack of socialization within the organization. Further that the individual motivation was lacking after the change towards remote work. The empirical findings have thus given an actual example of when an individual who claims to be driven by affiliation but is given no or few opportunities for social interactions, experiences a lack of individual motivation.

6.3 Goal-setting

Several respondents have explained the importance of having clear goals for well-functioning self-leadership. As an illustration, one of the leaders mentioned that it is the goal process that lays the basis for self-leadership in the organization and clarifies what is essential to do and how to perform. Not least in remote work, where the goal process clarifies work tasks as well as focus areas for individuals in the organization. This is also confirmed by one of the employees who expresses that specific goals facilitate an understanding of how to work independently. This can strongly be linked to Marques-Quinteiro & Curral (2009, p. 164) who likewise mentions that clear goals facilitate the promotion of self-leadership. The majority of the organizations are in a clear way working with stating goals in order for employees to know what to do. Moreover, all respondents have explained that goals are continuously followed up, either by managers or by the teams.

Two of the studied organizations are protruding with their way of working with goals. One of the leaders explains that follow-up on goals is characterizing a control-based organization. Rather, goals should be followed up by the individual him/herself or by the team. In one of the employee organizations, the organization has no specific way of working with goals. The same employee has expressed that it is somewhat hard to set own goals but that support is available when needed. The same employee has expressed a lack of motivation to own work. This can be connected to Bäcklander (2019, p. 99) which means that clear goals can facilitate motivation. It can thus be argued that the lack of motivation for the employee could be drawn to the lack of clear goals. Since Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, (2009, p. 164) has depicted that clear goal management and defining the *how* and the *why* is important for self-leadership, it could be argued in the situation of this employee, that the organization purposely has room for improvement in goal-setting. Improvement could then, in turn, be likely to enhance motivation as well as boosting self-leadership. Locke & Latham (2002, pp. 706-708) has furthermore depicted the importance of leaders engaging in goal setting and clarifying goals when needed. The authors have explained that support and involving employees in goal-setting is important to create an understanding for the target (Locke & Latham, 2002, pp. 706-708). This is partly confirmed by the empirical findings in this study, which showed that the majority of participating respondents had support from their managers in the goal-setting process. However, respective employees had support generally in the organization, intended whether it is about goal-setting or assistance. Thus, support is present in all studied organizations, but the analysis of the empirical material shows that it is essential to provide employees with continuous support through the goal-setting process.

When comparing leaders' and employees' answers if difficult goals are motivating to the individuals, the leaders have common answers. All four leaders have mentioned that difficult

goals are motivating to the individuals. However, the goals have to be achievable. Two of the leaders have mentioned that it is important to support and have an individual-based leadership style, to help employees reach such goals. When comparing the employees' answers, two of the employees mentioned that difficult goals or tasks are motivating. The remaining three employees mentioned that it can be hard to motivate oneself with difficult tasks. Additionally, the task itself needs to be relevant for them to increase their motivation to accomplish the assignment. This can be connected to Houghton & Neck (2002, p. 673), and the presented strategy of *natural reward* within self-leadership, that individuals enhance the feeling of understanding and self-control when he or she feels that the task is rewarding to achieve. This can also be linked to Robbins et al., (2010, p. 149) that states that acceptance of the goal is essential to increase performance. Furthermore, to Marques-Quintero & Currell (2009, p. 166) who argue that it is the motivation of the individual that determines the effort and willingness to reach a set goal. One of the employees further mentioned that difficult goals can decrease motivation. The same respondent has previously mentioned being motivated by affiliation. The lack of motivation for reaching a challenging goal or task can thus be linked to what the individual is motivated by. The employee that mentioned a low motivation for difficult goals has further depicted a low self-efficacy. This can thus be connected to Robbin et al., (2010, p. 151), who explained that being motivated to achieve difficult goals can mainly be drawn to the level of self-efficacy of the individual.

6.4 Self-efficacy

Each respondent has raised the possibility of independently influencing their work. Furthermore, four out of five employees state that their self-efficacy is high. Two managers present that their employees have high self-efficacy, while one manager claims that it varies between employees. This may indicate that Prussia et al., (1998, pp. 525-526) statement that enhanced control and confidence triggers self-efficacy in a positive manner also is confirmed by our study. Respective leaders in the study have expressed that support is important to counteract fluctuating self-efficacy. Moreover, it is the responsibility of managers to ensure that employees feel comfortable in their position and know that they are contributing value to the organization. Two of the employees state that support is not only important from a managerial direction, but from various people in the organization, such as colleagues.

There also seems to be a connection between reduced motivation, and the belief in one's own ability to perform tasks, where one of the employees stated that the individual motivation is low and that the belief in one's own ability to perform tasks is deficient. This employee also stated that the organization's goals are unclear, and also that it is difficult to set individual goals to strive for. This can therefore be linked to Ives & Cox (2012, p. 96) statement, that clearly defined goals are a prerequisite for increased self-efficacy. Thus, it seems that our empirical evidence has confirmed the theory. On the other hand, our empirical evidence also shows that motivation does not have to have a direct connection with self-efficacy, as the respondents state that they have faith in their own ability to execute tasks, but do not always feel motivated to perform. Thus, it seems that there is a connection between self-efficacy and motivation, rather than a dynamic relationship.

Prussia et.al (1998, p. 525) have presented that there is strong empirical support for the link between self-efficacy and performance, where high self-efficacy leads to high performance. In our study, however, one of the leaders states that their employees perform at a higher level than they consider themselves capable of. This entails that their performance is higher than their self-efficacy. The leader, who presents that the level of high self-efficacy varies in the organization, also explains that the majority of employees are dedicated to their tasks, take

responsibility, and perform at a high level. Thus, this shows that high self-efficacy does not necessarily lead to high performance and that the concepts can be separated depending on the context. Although this is not a majority answer, it cannot be ignored in the study, and the results from the empiric thus contradict the previously presented theory on self-efficacy.

That there is a connection between individuals' level of self-efficacy and the capacity to exercise self-leadership and vice versa presented by Konradt et al., (2009, p. 339) and Megheirkouni, 2018, p. 403, is confirmed by our study. The majority of the respondents (6 out of 8) present that they, or their employees, have high self-efficacy, and at the same time state that they have a high impact on their own work. Furthermore, all respondents state that the support function is present and accessible, which we have previously stated is a prerequisite for well-functioning self-leadership.

7. Conclusion and discussions

This section will present the most prominent conclusion derived from the results of this study. The study's theoretical, practical, societal, and ethical implications are further discussed. Lastly, limitations, as well as future perspectives on research within self-leadership, are presented.

7.1 How do Swedish medium and large-sized organizations manage self-leadership in remote environments?

Throughout the empirical findings and analysis, we have clarified *how Swedish medium and large-sized organizations manage self-leadership in remote environments*. What is most clearly prominent as important for well-functioning self-leadership in the studied context are the three components; *social interactions, support* and *culture*. The findings of this thesis has shown that these three components need to be integrated and processed in order to manage self-management in remote contexts. Organizations thus need to promote *social interactions*, enable *support* throughout the organization, and convey a *clear culture* with goals and visions to their employees. These main findings will be elaborated on in chronological order in the following paragraphs.

First, this study has shown that one of the main challenges connected to managing self-leadership in a remote context is to enable *social interactions* with colleagues and managers. Even though self-leadership is about managing one's own work independently, it is said from one of the respondents that far from all individuals are suitable for working completely alone. As an illustration, it has been shown that respondents of the study allow regular meetings in order to discuss their work on individual, team- and organizational levels. Social interactions are important to enable spontaneous discussions, promote project ideas, and to clarify labor division. Furthermore, social interaction is important to increase personal relationships and enable dialogues about other than work-related topics. To facilitate a social context under remote conditions, different solutions thus need to be adapted continuously. The studied organizations have created "walk-and-talk" meetings with colleagues to promote socialization, fika breaks, and "town-halls", to enable non-work-related discussions. For interaction, the most common channels for meetings are mentioned to be Zoom, Teams, and Google meet. The results of the study showed that the frequency of these meetings differ but the most common is to hold daily or weekly meetings. Social contexts have also been proven to affect motivation, as several respondents have mentioned that less social interaction has led to lower motivation. Likewise, several respondents have mentioned being mainly motivated by affiliation.

Even though socialization is present in a digital context, it is mentioned to be impossible to replace physical meetings. However, the promotion of socialization has been proved to be important to promote self-leadership, not only to retain relationships with colleagues, managers or teams but also to eliminate the risk of communication failures. In summary, social interactions must be made possible repeatedly, and seen as a given part of the work structure, in order to promote self-leadership. Leaders should adopt the opportunity for interactions based on employee's needs, and enable conversations about non-work-related topics. The employees should highlight the need for social interactions, and find ideas on how this can be designed to suit them individually, and on a group level. Thus, it is based on a collaboration between leaders and employees, to adapt the opportunity for social interactions connected to participants and context. The empirical evidence of this study further shows that the possibility of social interactions is of great importance regardless of industry. Although,

the respondents have shown that social interactions are important to implement more frequently in some organizations, than others. It is thus up to the organization to identify this need and adapt the possibility of social interactions accordingly.

Secondly, *support* has been mentioned to be important in order to promote self-leadership by all respondents in this study. On the contrary, not being underpinned by others can result in increased stress or in a lack of motivation. It has also been said that support can result in more complex goals being easier to achieve, as guidance is provided through the goal-process, which enables discussions and help with/from colleagues and managers. This has been mentioned by all the respondents of this study. The connection between goals and support has further been expressed by the respondents, where difficult goals are said to become more acceptable to achieve if the support function is present. The results of this study show that support in the studied organizations is mainly facilitated through meetings and by regular follow-ups, with colleagues, in teams, or by managers. It is important for managers to enable support to the highest possible extent, and for employees to express the need for support of managers and employees. The majority of respondents believe that they, or their leaders, have a supportive leadership style that enables communication and support when needed. Moreover, this study has marked that the importance of support from different directions is highly essential when self-efficacy is absent among the individuals. This can be done by leaders clarifying the employees' role, and what value they contribute to the organization. Support is thus a prerequisite for both self-leadership, self-efficacy, and goal-fulfillment, also to counteract lack of motivation.

Lastly, the organizational *culture* is highlighted as a prerequisite for making employees work in line with the organization. Visions, values, and policies are interrelated with the concept of culture and presented as important to create a transparent working environment. If these pillars of the organization are not clearly defined and conveyed, difficulties in understanding and performing tasks may arise among employees. It also creates difficulty in setting personal goals, understanding the company's ambitions and impairs the ability to exercise self-leadership. It has also been shown that a lack of clear culture can create a lower motivation to work independently since there can arise uncertainties in what is expected. On the contrary, an examined organization in this study has shown that self-leadership is managed successfully in the remote environment due to the set culture, values, and policies of the company. It is consequently important to clarify and maintain the culture of the organization in a remote environment, in order for employees to know conditions and expectations of the organization.

In summary, the results of this study have mainly shown that the relationship between employees and leaders becomes dynamic in connection with self-leadership and remote work. Generally, the management creates conditions for support, culture, and social interactions within the organization. The employees have a responsibility to take advantage of these opportunities and express wishes, needs, and ideas. These conditions and expressed needs affect one another. They thus need to be balanced to create a symmetry between leader and employees, to enable self-leadership. In order to promote self-leadership in the remote context, an ongoing collaboration between management and staff is thus required. This, to enable improvements in the various organizational parts, to constantly match employee demand, both in terms of the level of social interactions, support and cultural issues that arise. This, in order to enable increased motivation, goal fulfillment, and increased self-efficacy, which in turn all has an effect on the exercise of self-leadership.

The results of this study have further clarified the importance of personalized opportunities. In order to increase motivation for some individuals, the opportunity for more support and social interactions are essential, while some individuals need less support and instead want tasks of a more difficult nature to increase their motivation. As Dubrin (2015, p. 28) mentioned, leaders should thus promote self-leadership based on the employees' individual competence and commitment. Thus, there is no general answer to how much or how little of these features should be used within organizations. However, we can state that an organization that is characterized by a transparent and clear culture with communicated values and goals, that enables support and social interactions, has good conditions for well-functioning self-leadership during remote environments. Although, support and social interactions need to be made possible to different extents depending on the needs of the organization. The communication function thus becomes of the utmost importance, which is promoted by a transparent culture, social interactions, and support. This study has thus clarified and shown the dynamic relationship within organizations practicing remote work and self-leadership, where all functions affect each other, and thus must be taken into account and continuously changed in the direction of the organization.

The following model is the result of previously identified factors influencing self-leadership and this study's empirical findings on factors influencing self-management in a remote environment on the Swedish labor market. The factors in the left column have been consistently described in this thesis as having an impact on self-leadership. While the three factors on the right-hand column have been shown to be of high relevance when self-leadership is to be promoted at a distance. All factors in the compiled model should thus be taken into account in the question of how organizations can manage self-leadership on the Swedish market, but, as previously mentioned, on a level that fits the organization's needs. When managing self-leadership in remote environments, however, the findings of this study are above all relevant to implement.

Self-leadership

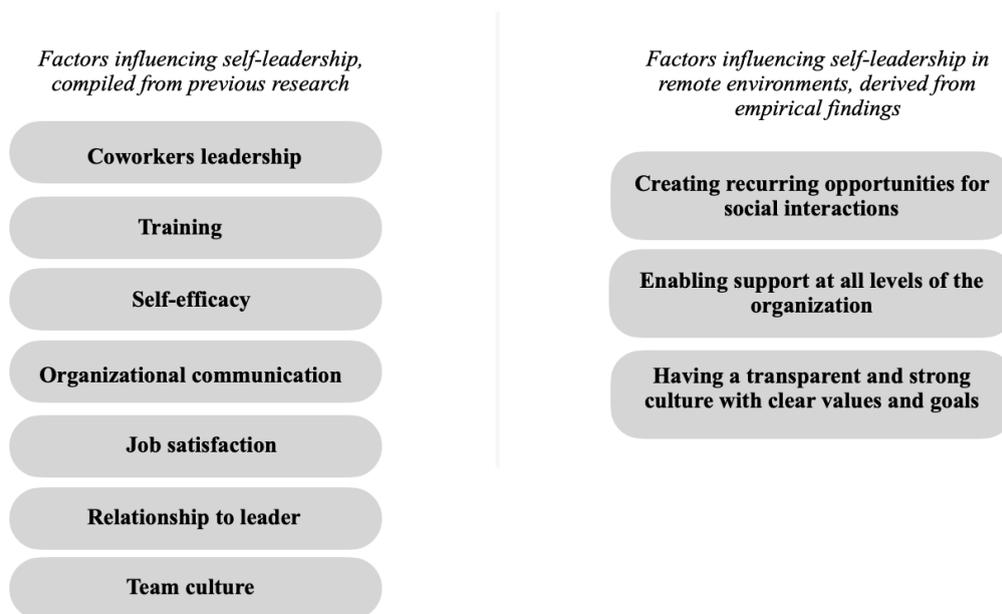


Figure 5: Model on managing self-leadership
Source: Authors

7.2 Theoretical implications

We have previously presented research gaps connected to the subject of self-leadership. It can be concluded that no previous study found have examined self-leadership in remote environments on Swedish medium and large-sized organizations. Rather, self-leadership and remote work have been examined separately, which we initially criticized. A proposal for studying self-leadership in a diverse context has also been mentioned by Müller Niessen (2017 p. 87). Thus, we have chosen to examine the interrelation between these aspects and hence make a theoretical implication on how self-leadership and remote work affect one another. The study has thus examined self-leadership in a diverse context, as stated necessary by Müller & Niessen (2017 p. 87). Moreover, this research has been accomplished by a qualitative character as well as with extensive empirical findings. Two aspects that previously has been expressed to be lacking in research on self-leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006, p. 274; Talsi, 2017, p. 15)

One of the main findings of this study has shown that social contexts are crucial for managing self-leadership in a remote environment. When analyzing previous research on self-leadership, there has clearly been a lack of importance of social contexts. Instead, previous research has focused on self-leadership in connection with other aspects and conditions such as goals, (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2009, p.163) and motivation (Robbins, 2010, p. 140). Accordingly, we believe the social context is a perspective that should be seen as highly relevant for the performance of self-leadership in a remote environment. The lack of the socialization perspective in previous research can thus be criticized. Consequently, a main theoretical implication, and a contribution to existing theories of this study, is that social interactions and making opportunities for contexts of social character are vital for self-leadership in remote environments.

We have in the introductory chapter moreover referred to Megherkouni (2018, p. 395), which stressed that the relationship between self-leadership and an individual's self-efficacy is dynamic. By including self-efficacy in relation to self-leadership, we have consequently contributed to the research on the interlinktion between the concepts. The results however show that there may be a connection between high self-efficacy and a high level of self-leadership, but that the relationship should not solely be described as dynamic. This is based on the respondents clarifying that some of the employees exercise a high level of self-leadership, but have poor faith in their own ability to perform specific tasks, thus that they have low self-efficacy. The concepts have, in this study, instead shown to be highly connected to the possibility of support. Individuals who have the opportunity for support believe, to a greater extent, in their own ability to perform tasks, and thus increase their self-efficacy. Further, support has proven to be a prerequisite for well-functioning self-leadership. The two concepts are thus clearly linked to the support function that exists within organizations and is thus related to each other. Although, this does not necessarily mean that high self-efficacy leads to high levels of self-leadership and vice versa, neither that it does not.

7.3 Practical recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, practical recommendations are proposed for medium and large-sized organizations within the Swedish labor market. The recommendations have thus been suggested in order to influence and gain knowledge on how self-leadership can be managed within these organizations. A considerable amount of the Swedish labor market is further currently working remotely due to the ongoing pandemic, and the demand for

working independently is therefore increasing. We thus believe that the recommendations will be of practical use for organizations that have, or are going to implement a similar working structure as the examined organizations in this study. Even though the focus of this study is the Swedish labor market, we claim that the results could be useful, even for a non-swedish company, interested in how to manage self-leadership in remote environments. However, it is important to remember that different markets have different cultures, and that a result on the Swedish market may not be transferable into a foreign one. Yet, the opportunity for support and social interactions, and to some extent culture, can act as an influencer for companies in global markets when it comes to managing self-leadership in remote environments.

Based on the results of this study, the practical recommendations are to invest resources in developing the possibility of social interactions, support functions, and transparent and strong culture with clear values and goals. This, in order to increase the exertion of self-leadership during remote contexts. Having a support function is likely to enhance individuals' motivation for working independently and for achieving goals. In addition, practical work with support can decrease the risk of stress among individuals in the organization. The recommendation is perhaps mostly linked to managerial responsibility. However, the findings of this study show that it is essential to allow support from other individuals in the organization, such as colleagues or teams. The employees thus have a responsibility to express a need for e.g increased support, in order to create an understanding in the management of what is needed. Thus, the opportunity for employees to interact and influence organizational decisions and processes are required, this, to include them and listen to their needs and suggestions. Support is, according to this study, best facilitated by continuous follow-ups or meetings.

Social interactions have proven to be extremely crucial for both the exercise of self-leadership, increased motivation, goal fulfillment, and self-efficacy. These factors in turn affect the performance of employees, and social interactions can thus intimately affect individual- and organizational performance positively. The study has mainly shown that social interactions are important to enable non-work-related discussions and positive relationship-building in various directions in the organization. Also how to enable spontaneous discussions, promote project ideas, and clarify labor division. The practical recommendation to Swedish medium-sized and large organizations is thus to enable social interactions to the extent that suits those included. As well as for employees to express a need or desire for the level of opportunity for these interactions. Thus, a collaboration between the management and employees, to enable a level of interactions adapted to the organization's needs, is essential.

Another practical recommendation is further to find digital solutions for meetings on informal as well as formal levels. Presumably, organizations that have already implemented remote work have likely also implemented some kind of digital solutions. However, this study has certainly highlighted the importance of having well-functioning options for meeting with colleagues, managers, and teams in order to facilitate self-leadership. Apart from the most common solutions as Teams and Zoom, a recommendation from the empirical findings in this study is to use walks-and-talks, fika-breaks, or “town halls” to increase social interactions. A further recommendation based on the findings of this study is to hold meetings continuously on a regular basis, to facilitate dialogues and participation, which is of high essentiality in self-leadership in a remote context. Connected to the use of digital channels, the recommendation is to adapt the channel after the number of participants and the purpose of

the meeting. This entails that Teams can be better suited for smaller meetings, while Zoom and Google meet are better suited for larger gatherings and workshops. A concept as "town halls" may also be suitable for a larger participation group.

As far as culture is concerned, our practical recommendations are to be transparent in choices and values, in order to enable consensus and understanding in the organization. This entails that the management and the employees have a common understanding of what culture prevails, what values the company stands for, and what goals must be achieved. This is based on the results of the study, which showed that a weak culture, or lack of understanding of the culture, can lead to reduced motivation, difficulty in creating individual goals, and knowing what is expected from the individual, and organization. In the same way, the results from the study have shown that organizations that have a strong and transparent culture promote motivation, self-leadership, and goal fulfillment of individuals. Similarly, as explained in the previous paragraph, it is thus a balanced responsibility, where leaders and employees both have an obligation to create a well-functioning culture. The management needs to lay the basis and create conditions for individuals to participate in the creation and change of it. Additionally, individuals must express wishes and ideas in order to influence the organization's culture.

In summary, the practical recommendations are to promote dialogue, where leaders 'and employees' opinions, needs, and wishes can be balanced at a well-functioning level. This in terms of culture, the possibility of social interactions, and support for creating opportunities for medium-sized and large Swedish organizations to emphasize the best conditions for managing self-leadership in a remote environment.

7.4 Societal implications

This study has examined how self-leadership can be managed in a remote environment of Swedish medium- and large-sized organizations. The expectation with the study is that the results can be useful for organizations that have, or are going through a transition to a remote working environment. We thus hope that organizations or individuals that are taking part in the results of the study can gather practical recommendations on how to manage self-leadership in a remote working context. We have previously stated that self-leadership can enhance performance, with the prerequisites of clearly stated goals (Robbins et.al. 2010, p. 149). Self-leadership can also, as previously mentioned, enhance the possibility of job satisfaction (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2019, p. 95). Job satisfaction is additionally linked to life satisfaction, which can decrease employee turnover if the satisfaction of employees is high. A situation that otherwise can be very costly (Das & Baruah, 2013, p. 12). Taking part in the results of this study and enhancing the possibility to manage self-leadership within a remote working organization, can consequently be an advantage from a monetary perspective as well as for productivity. By taking part in the results of the study and thus preventing aspects such as job dissatisfaction, life dissatisfaction, and employee turnover, this study can thus lead to positive societal implications on the individual- and organizational levels.

Since remote work is now characterizing the labor market around Sweden, it is necessary for organizations to find suitable ways to manage independent work, without the same support and presence from managers and colleagues. Thus, we believe that individuals and organizations can be influenced by the practical suggestions of this study, in order to facilitate self-leadership in this working context. We also believe that in the short term, managing self-leadership in a remote environment can lead to a successful organizational outcome in the pandemic situation. This, since our presented recommendations can help organizations

adjust and change their way of working in this particular environment in regard to self-leadership, motivation, goal-setting, and self-efficacy. Unlike if they did not take part in these findings. The results can be used to save time, cost, and valuable staff, as the handling of self-leadership in a remote environment is managed in a promotional way. This thus also positively affects employees, and individuals influenced by organizations promoting the work of self-leadership, and in turn job- and life satisfaction.

In a longer perspective, we believe that regardless of whether society and its demands change, companies will be able to benefit from these results. This, as they are applicable to a growing remote context, which will most likely continue to be present in the future. However, new ways of working remotely, or new ways of managing self-leadership are likely to occur, and can therefore assist as a complement to this study's results, or even replace its findings. Although, the results of this study have shown that social interactions, support, as well as having clear visions and strong transparent culture, is essential for self-leadership today. Since these aspects are not likely to be trends, we believe that these insights will be a condition for self-leadership under remote environments even in a longer perspective. Thus, the findings of this study indicate to have positive societal implications in the short- and long term.

7.5 Sustainable implications

We believe that this study can be sustainably beneficial from the *Triple bottom line (TBL)-perspective*. The triple bottom line explains corporate social responsibility from three aspects; profit, planet, and people (Whittington, 2020, p. 374). The first component, profit, depicts a monetary perspective on sustainability. An example of the profit perspective is that an organization should have positive economic measures such as sales and reduced costs (Whittington, 2020, p. 374). We believe that this study is likely to have a positive effect on profit since a higher job satisfaction due to increased self-leadership may lead to employee retention. In turn, organizations can save costs related to recruitment and employee unhealthiness which is beneficial for the *profit* of the organization. Additionally, organizations can save money on business trips that would have been made if the work had taken place physically in offices. Instead, this thesis can contribute to organizations' knowledge of the benefits of working remotely, and thus create conditions for well-functioning distance work and collaboration with other actors, which in turn can save money for the organization.

The second component, people, is about taking responsibility by e.g promoting well-being, quality of life, and health (Slaper & Hall, 2011, p. 5). Since self-leadership is likely to result in positive outcomes for individuals, it can consequently be said to be advantageous for the *people* of the organization. This, as the working environment becomes prominent, as individuals to a greater extent can affect their work, and engage in the layouts of organizational structure, processes, and culture. This is based on this thesis's findings, that self-leadership requires good resources for support, social interactions, and a clear culture, all of which promote increased motivation and performance when being based on individual desires and needs. A solid focus on communication structures that allows participation and dialogue are thus needed to promote these components. However, when this is achieved, each individual's opinion, goals, and requirements are an important part of the organizational work, and also affect their job well-being to a positive extent, as they can interact and influence their own work situation in a more efficient and well-managed way.

The last component of the triple bottom line is *planet* and refers to the corporate

responsibility of using limited environmental resources (Slaper & Hall, 2011, p. 5). We believe that if remote work is managed well through self-leadership, motivation, as well as the performance of individuals will increase. This can in turn affect and change organizations' need to work full time in offices in the future. If the individual thus is given the responsibility to work from home, travel to, in- and from work can decrease. This can, in turn, result in fewer negative consequences for the environment and *planet*, such as reduced CO2 emissions. Individuals can also save time due to reduced travel and thus spend more time with e.g family. The reduced travel can thus lead to a better work-life balance and consequently better well-being. In summary, we see a positive impact on various factors within the TBL perspective through our findings in this work. However, this presupposes that organizations follow our recommendations, and work in a way that promotes self-leadership and remote work for the best outcome.

7.6 Limitations and future research

The purpose of this study was to explain and generate insights on how self-leadership could be managed in medium-and large-sized Swedish organizations in a remote environment. In this context, medium-sized companies refer to enterprises with 50-249 employees, and large companies refer to companies with over 250 employees (Ekonomifakta, 2020). The reason for making a limitation to only examine medium and large-sized companies is due to the fact that previous studies have depicted several medium and large-sized companies doing digital transformations during the last year. Additionally, because identified companies of this size have reportedly declared that they will continue in a similar pattern in the future (Unit4, 2020; Digital strategi, 2020). This research paper was further limited to organizations that are partly or entirely working remotely, and with digital tools as an effect of covid-19.

Consequently, nine respondents' answers characterized the results and the recommendations of the thesis. After the ninth interview, we believed that the information from the respondents rather confirmed or denied previously mentioned statements, than contributed with new information. There was thus no relevance to integrate more respondents in this study. If this study instead intended to generate a result, it would have been suitable to choose a bigger sample of respondents. The sample could then represent a group or a sector in order to facilitate the transition of the results to a similar population (Collis & Hussey, 2014, pp. 408-409). A suggestion for future research is thus to examine more individuals to allow generalization.

This study has, as previously mentioned, been characterized by a qualitative method. A further proposal for future research is to accomplish a similar study, where the researchers complement the qualitative method with quantitative elements, such as surveys. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods is called triangulation and aims at validating the results or getting a more in-depth perspective on a phenomenon (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 75). The results of the study would thus be based on more than one method and could perhaps be more reliable. Another methodological option could be to do a single case study. This study could examine leaders and employees from the same organization and thus depict how the perception of self-leadership in remote environments differs in the same organization. Conclusively, a proposal for future research is to use other, or several different methods, to get a broader perspective on self-leadership.

Another recommendation is to examine organizations in other sectors or of different sizes, to create a result that can be applied to other than similar organizations to those studied in this thesis. This would allow a comparison of how the management of self-leadership looks in

different organizations or sectors. An example is to conduct a study that compares managing self-leadership between small and large organizations or in the private- and public sector. Another recommendation is to conduct a similar study in a country other than Sweden, alternatively other countries, to create an understanding of the management of self-leadership in a different market, or on a global level. Furthermore, positive outcomes, presented with self-leadership, such as improved health, work environment and job satisfaction can be interesting to study in different markets. This to identify similarities and differences, both nationally, globally, and across several markets. Such an example of a study would be interesting in order to continue on the sustainable aspect of self-leadership.

An example of future research that we consider particularly interesting and relevant is to study *how the possibility of self-leadership and flexible work affects the job choice of individuals*. This means, how individuals reason when they look for work, in connection with the possibility of managing their work flexibly. This study has shown the importance of self-leadership, and also found that flexible work and thus demands on individuals' own control of their work has increased. Therefore, it is interesting to see how individuals are affected by the option to work flexibly, and possibly create an understanding of individuals considering, as a result of covid-19 and its requirements on remote work.

8. Truth criteria

Qualitative research is often assessed by different criteria in order to ensure quality. According to Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 395), qualitative research is often measured by its trustworthiness & authenticity. We ought to thoroughly explain in the coming section how these two criteria have impacted our way of conducting this study.

8.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness has four sub-criteria. The first sub-criteria is *credibility* and refers to how well the decision of method and process fit with the focus of the study. It is also essential for ensuring credibility that the amount of data is considered accurate to fulfill the purpose of the study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 109). In this thesis, we have thoroughly accounted for the qualitative method used to answer the research question of the study. The choice of method has thus influenced all actions and choices made under the process of conducting the different chapters. The qualitative method has as an example influenced the choice of doing semi-structured interviews. We believe that the nine held interviews have allowed us to explain the phenomenon and to answer our research question in this thesis. Thus, no additional samples or respondents were seen as necessary to fulfill the purpose of this study.

The next sub-criteria is *transferability* and refers to if the results of the study can be transferred to other contexts or groups (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 110). This study has, as previously mentioned, only examined a population of nine individuals. The intention was thus never to generalize the results to other groups. Thus study instead intended to explain and give insights on how self-leadership and managing one's own work can be managed in an environment of remote character. Hence, we rather aimed at generating a result that could be useful for similar organizations facing similar challenges. This study could then act as a framework, rather than being transferred, for organizations or individuals that are taking part in the study.

The third sub-criteria is *confirmability* and intends to ensure that the researcher has not let their own personal values or opinions impact the research. However, in a study of a qualitative approach, it is nearly impossible to be completely objective. According to the confirmability criteria, it is rather important that the researcher has acted in good faith (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398). It was throughout the study very important for us to act in good faith, in order for the respondents to feel comfortable with how the answers were processed and applied to the study. Since all respondents' answers have contributed to fulfilling the purpose of this study, we have never intended to angle the results of this study. We have moreover a limited pre-understanding of the subject of self-leadership in interrelation to remote work. Hence, we do not believe that previous experiences nor knowledge have impacted the results of this study to a significant extent. As a conclusion, we have throughout the whole thesis been embedded with the research process due to a study of the subjective character. However, we have never intended to let our personal values, knowledge, or experience color any result of the study.

The fourth and last sub-criteria of trustworthiness is *dependability* and entails if the findings are consistent if the study was to be replicable under the same circumstances. If the study ought to be repeated, and if there would be discrepancies between the first conducted study and the second, the study would not be reliable (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). A method to ensure dependability is to be transparent of the research process and methods, but also to keep a record of the interview transcripts (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398). The intention

throughout this thesis has been to present all choices as transparent and clear as possible. We have motivated our choices and actions in order for the reader to understand how the processes and thoughts have progressed. We have further transcribed the interviews in order to correctly render all respondents' answers. However, if a similar study ought to be made, the supplementary questions may deviate in the conduct of the interviews. Thus, the answers would be similar to the ones that we gathered but perhaps be developed in different manners. We consequently believe that if the same study was to be replicated, the answers and results of the study would be similarly consistent to this version, with an understanding of the above-mentioned deviations.

8.2 Authenticity

The authenticity of this study is assessed in all studies of a qualitative nature. This criterion contains the following elements; *true image*, *ontological authenticity*, *pedagogical authenticity*, *catalytic authenticity*, and *tactical authenticity* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398).

In order for the study to present a true and fair view, each interview was recorded to enable the collected information to be exposed in the same way as it was shared with us at the first occasion. An interpretation of the information has thus not been shared. Rather, original information has been presented throughout the empirical work. The collected material is thus reflected in the final empirical data and thus does not consist of exclusively subjective interpretations. Although, subjectivity is difficult to completely avoid in a study of qualitative character (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 742; Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 408). Because the processing and presentation of collected empirical data consist of original statements from the respondents, and the collected material has not been distorted for the presentation of the empirical data, the criterion of a *true image* is met (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398).

Throughout the interviews, the chosen study concepts and their content were presented to ensure that the respondents understood the study areas in the desired way, to contribute to the purpose of the study. Furthermore, each respondent has been able to read through the empirical data and approve it before publication. Thus, they have been given the opportunity to comment and express opinions about our compiled empirical data based on their statements and shared information. Our expectation is that the respondents have learned, and gained new perspectives on the subject of self-leadership and its accompanying components. Furthermore, the results of the study have increased awareness of the importance of working continuously with self-leadership, and how this can be done. Thus, we have contributed to the respondents' understanding of the chosen subject and met the criterion for *ontological authenticity* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398).

Thus, the next criterion, *pedagogical authenticity*, has also been met. This is because the respondents have been given the opportunity to take part in each other's statements, and thus perspectives from individuals who are in similar contexts as themselves (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399). As both employees and leaders were examined in the study, there is information about both sample groups to retrieve. This criterion is thus reinforced. The study may also have inspired respondents to enforce change in their respective organizations. For leaders to create a transparent and strong culture, with clear values and goals, a well-functioning support function, and increased opportunity for social interactions. The employees have in turn, possibly increased their understanding of their own part in change work, and that it is of great importance that they participate in discussions and contribute their opinions to influence the organization in a direction that suits them. Thus, the criterion of *catalytic authenticity* is met (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399).

As this study aims to examine organizations that have changed their way of working as a result of the pandemic's requirements and actions, they are in a position to influence their new digital way of working. Working remotely will also continue to be an option for all studied organizations, and if sold, there is always the opportunity to improve functions and working methods. The studied organizations, therefore, have the opportunity to influence both their current and future position with the support of the results of this study. The requirement for *tactical authenticity* is thus met (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399).

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Interview guide - employees

Question	Subject	Purpose of question
<p>For how long have you been working on XX?</p> <p>Hur länge har du arbetat på XX?</p>	Intro	Gather background information on the respondent
<p>What position do you have at XX?</p> <p>Vad har du för roll på XX?</p>	Intro	Gather background information on the respondent
<p>Tell us about how you have changed your way of working as a result of the pandemic</p> <p>Hur har ni ändrat arbetssätt till följd av pandemin?</p>	Remote work	Get an understanding of how the company is working in a remote environment
<p>How do you work with digital resources?</p> <p>Hur arbetar ni med digitala resurser?</p>	Remote work	Get an understanding of how the company is working with digital tools in a remote environment
<p>What pros and cons do you see with remote work?</p> <p>Vad ser du för fördelar och nackdelar med distansarbete?</p>	Remote work	Get an understanding of possibilities and challenges with the current working environment
<p>Will remote work be in question for the company in the future (after corona)? Why?</p> <p>Kommer distansarbete vara aktuellt för ert företag i framtiden (efter corona)? <i>Varför?</i></p>	Remote work	Gather knowledge on the companies view of working remotely
<p>What prerequisites exist for remote work in your company in the current situation, and which can be developed and implemented?</p> <p>Vilka förutsättningar för distansarbete finns, som kan utvecklas och implementeras i företaget (enligt dig)?</p>	Remote work	Get an understanding of how remote work is best facilitated
<p>How are your company actively working with self-leadership within your organization?</p>	Self-leadership	Get an understanding if self-leadership is a term that the company uses

<p>Hur arbetar ni aktivt med att främja själv-ledaskap i er organisation? På vilket sätt?</p>		
<p>In what way do you have the opportunity to independently plan your work? <i>Such as working hours, goals, performance of tasks, etc.</i></p> <p>På vilket sätt har du möjlighet att självständigt utforma ditt arbete? Såsom arbetstider, målsättning mm.?</p>	<p>Self-leadership</p>	<p>To understand how the company is working with self-leadership</p>
<p>Do you feel a desire or need to increase the opportunity for independent work, responsibility and control of the tasks?</p> <p>Ser du en önskan/behov av att öka möjligheten till självständigt arbete, ansvar och kontroll av arbetsuppgifterna i er organisation?</p>	<p>Self-leadership</p>	<p>To understand the employees and the leaders perception of self-leadership</p>
<p>How is the division of responsibilities based on the individuals within the organization? <i>Ex: personality, will and competence?</i></p> <p>Hur baseras ansvarsfördelningen och arbetsuppgifter utifrån individerna inom organisationen? Ex: personlighet, vilja och kompetens?</p>	<p>Self-leadership</p>	<p>To understand how the company is working with self-leadership</p>
<p>Do you get any training in how you can manage your daily work? What type of training?</p> <p>Får ni någon träning i hur ni själv kan styra ert dagliga arbete?</p>	<p>Self-leadership</p>	<p>To understand if training can facilitate managing self-leadership</p>
<p>Is there any follow-up to see that the work goes in the direction of the company's wishes? <i>What kind?</i></p> <p>Hur följs medarbetares arbete upp för att säkerställa att det går i riktning med företagets mål?</p>	<p>Self-leadership</p>	<p>To understand how the organization is making sure that the employees independent work goes in line with the organization</p>
<p>How is job satisfaction followed-up within the company? <i>E.g Employee surveys</i></p> <p>Hur följs jobbtillfredsställelse upp inom företaget?</p>	<p>Self-leadership</p>	<p>To understand the interlinking between self-leadership and job satisfaction</p>

<p>What leadership style do you perceive your boss to have?</p> <p>Vilken ledarskapsstil upplever du att din chef har?</p>	Self-leadership	To understand how the leadership style can benefit or hinder the self-leadership
<p>What kind of relationship do you have with your boss?</p> <p>Vilken relation har du till din chef?</p>	Self-leadership	Understanding the relationship-component in relation to self-leadership
<p>Do you feel that all employees can independently manage and take responsibility for their daily work? <i>How?</i></p> <p>Upplever du att alla medarbetare tar stort eget ansvar för det dagliga arbetet, eller få utvalda?</p>	Self-leadership	To understand the employees perception of self-leadership
<p>In what way does remote work affect your way of managing and influencing your work independently?</p> <p>Upplever du distansarbete har påverkat ditt sätt att självständigt arbeta?</p>	Self-leadership	Understand how the new working environment has affected self-leadership
<p>Do you experience any difference in the way you influence and manage your work before and after the transformation to the digital/remote way of working?</p> <p>Upplever du en skillnad i hur du självständigt utformar ditt arbete före och efter förändringen till att arbeta helt/delvis på distans?</p>	Self-leadership	Understand how the new working environment has affected self-leadership
<p>How is your company working with motivation?</p> <p>Hur jobbar ditt företag med motivation?</p>	Motivation	Understand how the company is working with motivation
<p>What are you doing to enhance motivation?</p> <p>Vad gör du för att öka motivation?</p>	Motivation	Understand how the employee is working with motivation
<p>Which of these three factors do you think you are most motivated by?: achievement (fulfilling difficult goals), power (having high influence / controlling others) or social interactions (feeling seen / having close relationships).</p>	Motivation	Understanding the individual's working motivation from the framework of McClelland theory of motivation.

Vilka av dessa tre faktorer anser du dig mest motiverad av? Achievement (uppnå svåra mål), power (påverka andra) eller sociala interaktioner?		
Has the motivation for efforts and achievements increased or decreased since you made the transition to remote work? <i>Why do you think the outcome has been that way?</i> Har motivationen för insatser och prestation på arbetsplatsen ökat eller minskat sedan ni ändrade arbetet från fysiskt till (delvis) distans? <i>Varför tror du att utfallet blivit på det viset?</i>	Motivation	Understanding how the new working environment has affected the motivation
If motivation has decreased: how have you tackled that? Om motivationen har minskat: hur har du hanterat det?	Motivation	Understanding how the company can work with promoting motivation in new working environment
Who follows up on set goals? How? Vem följer upp uppsatta mål i organisationen? På vilket sätt	Goal-setting	To gather an understanding of goal-setting since it is a related component to self-leadership
Are the goals clarified by the company? Är målen i organisationen tydliga?	Goal-setting	To gather an understanding of goal-setting since it is a related component to self-leadership
In what way is there room to meet personal goals? På vilket sätt finns det utrymme att nå personliga mål?	Goal-setting	To understand if the company allow personal goals to be fulfilled since it is explained to enhance self-leadership
What is expected from you to mee the organizational goals? Vad förväntas av dig för att uppnå organisatoriska mål?	Goal-setting	To understand if the goals are clearly defined and if the employees know what is expected on them.
In what way do you get support to meet the goals? På vilket sätt får du stöd att uppnå målen?	Goal-setting	To understand if there is any support in fulfilling goals independently
How are you affected by difficult goals? <i>Motivated / unmotivated?</i>	Goal-setting	To understand the relation between motivation and goals.

Hur blir du påverkad av svårt satta mål? <i>Motiverad/omotiverad</i>		
Do you have a strong belief in your own ability to perform specific tasks? <i>Explain</i> Känner du att du har en stark tro på din förmåga att utföra specifika uppgifter?	Self-efficacy	To be able to examine the employees self-efficacy since it is a main component of self-leadership
How do you feel when you have accomplished a task? Hur känner du när du uppnått ett mål?	Self-efficacy	Examine the employees satisfaction of completing a task since it is strongly related to the self-efficacy
How do you receive support to increase the belief in your own ability? Hur får du support att öka tron på din egen förmåga?	Self-efficacy	Examine relationship between self-efficacy and self-leadership

Appendix 2: Interview guide - Leaders

Question	Subject	
For how long have you been working at xx? Hur länge har du arbetat på XX?	Intro	Gather background information on the respondent
What position do you have at XX? Vilken position har du på XX?	Intro	Gather background information on the respondent
Can you shortly describe the culture at xx? Kan du kortfattat beskriva kulturen och arbetssättet på arbetsplatsen ? Ex, hierarki osv.	Intro	Gather background information on the structure of the organization
Tell us about how you have changed your way of working as a result of the pandemic Berätta om hur ni ändrat arbetssätt till följd av pandemi	Remote work	Get an understanding of how the company is working in a remote environment
How do you work with digital resources?	Remote work	Get an understanding of how the company is working with digital tools in a remote environment

Hur arbetar ni med digitala resurser?		
What pros and cons do you see with remote work? Vilka för och nackdelar ser du med distansarbetet?	Remote work	Get an understanding of possibilities and challenges with the current working environment
Will remote work be in question for the company in the future (after corona)? Why? Kommer distansarbete vara aktuellt för ert företag i framtiden (efter corona)? Varför?	Remote work	Gather knowledge on the companies view of working remotely
What prerequisites exist for remote work in your company in the current situation, and which can be developed and implemented? Vilka förutsättningar för distansarbete finns, som kan utvecklas och implementeras i företaget (enligt dig)?	Remote work	Get an understanding of how remote work is best facilitated
How are you actively working with self-leadership within your organization? Hur arbetar ni aktivt med att främja själv-ledarskap i er organisation? På vilket sätt	Self-leadership	Get an understanding on how self-leadership is taking form in the company
In what way do your employees have the opportunity to independently plan your work? <i>Such as working hours, goals, performance of tasks, etc.</i> På vilket sätt har de anställda möjlighet att självständigt utforma ditt arbete? <i>Såsom arbetstider, målsättning mm.</i>	Self-leadership	To understand how the company is working with self-leadership
Do you perceive a desire or need to increase the opportunity for independent work, responsibility and control of the tasks? Ser du en önskan/behov av att öka möjligheten till självständigt arbete, ansvar och kontroll av arbetsuppgifterna i er organisation?	Self-leadership	To understand the leaders perception of self-leadership in the organization

<p>How is the division of responsibilities based on the individuals within the organization? <i>Ex: personality, will and competence?</i></p> <p>Hur baseras ansvarsfördelningen och arbetsuppgifter utifrån individerna inom organisationen? <i>Ex: personlighet, vilja och kompetens?</i></p>	Self-leadership	To understand how the company is working with self-leadership
<p>What training do the employees get in how they can manage their daily work?</p> <p>Får medarbetarna någon träning i hur de själv kan styra sitt dagliga arbete?</p>	Self-leadership	To understand if self-leadership is only taught by learning-by-doing or if employees are trained
<p>What follow-up is there to see that the work goes in the direction of the company's wishes?</p> <p>Hur följs medarbetares arbete upp för att säkerställa att det går i riktning med företagets mål?</p>	Self-leadership	To understand how the independent work is followed-up
<p>How is job satisfaction followed-up within the company? <i>E.g Employee surveys</i></p> <p>Hur följs jobbtillfredsställelse upp inom företaget</p>	Self-leadership	To understand the interlinking between self-leadership and job satisfaction
<p>What leadership style would you describe your leadership with?</p> <p>Vilken ledarskapsstil skulle du säga att du har?</p>	Self-leadership	To understand how the leadership style can benefit or hinder the self-leadership
<p>What kind of relationship do you have with your employees?</p> <p>Vad har du för typ av relation till dina medarbetare?</p>	Self-leadership	Understanding the relationship-component in relation to self-leadership
<p>Do you feel that all employees can independently manage and take responsibility for their daily work? <i>How?</i></p> <p>Upplever du att alla medarbetare tar stort eget ansvar för det dagliga arbetet, eller få utvalda?</p>	Self-leadership	To understand the employees and the leaders perception of self-leadership
<p>In what way does remote work affect the way of influencing one's own work independently?</p>	Self-leadership	Understand how the new working environment has affected self-leadership

<p>På vilket sätt påverkar distansarbetet att självständigt utforma sina arbetsuppgifter?</p>		
<p>Do you experience a difference in how the employees independently manage their work before and after the transformation to the digital/remote way of working?</p> <p>Upplever du en skillnad i hur medarbetarna självständigt utformar sitt arbete före och efter förändringen till att medarbetare arbetar helt/delvis på distans?</p>	Self-leadership	Understand how the new working environment has affected self-leadership
<p>What possible challenges can you identify with self-leadership in an environment where employees are given flexibility and can work remotely? How can these challenges be addressed?</p> <p>Vilka eventuella utmaningar kan du identifiera med självledarskap i en miljö där medarbetare ges flexibilitet och kan jobba på distans? <i>Hur kan dessa utmaningar hanteras?</i></p>	Self-leadership	Understand how the new working environment has affected self-leadership
<p>How are your company working with motivation?</p> <p>Hur arbetar ditt företag med motivation?</p>	Motivation	Understand how the company is working with motivation
<p>Which of these three factors do you think your employees are most motivated by?: achievement (fulfilling difficult goals), power (having high influence / controlling others) or social interactions (feeling seen / having close relationships).</p> <p>Vilka av dessa tre faktorer tror du att de anställda blir mest motiverad av? Achievement (uppnå svårt mål), power (påverka andra) eller sociala interaktioner?</p>	Motivation	Understanding the individual's working motivation from the framework of McClelland theory of motivation.
<p>Has the motivation for efforts and achievements increased or decreased since you made the transition to remote work? <i>Why do you think the outcome has been that way?</i></p>	Motivation	Understanding how the new working environment has affected the motivation

Har motivationen för insatser och prestation på arbetsplatsen ökat eller minskat sedan ni ändrade arbetet från fysiskt till (delvis) distans? Varför tror du att utfallet blivit på det viset		
Who follows up on set goals? How? Vem följer upp uppsatta mål i organisationen? På vilket sätt?	Goals	To gather an understanding of goal-setting since it is a related component to self-leadership
How do you clarify the goals for the employees? Hur tydliggör ni målen för medarbetare?	Goals	To understand how goals can be clarified
In what way is there room to meet personal goals? Finns det utrymme att uppfylla personliga mål?	Goals	To understand in what way leaders can allow room for fulfilling personal goals
What conditions are provided for achieving organizational goals? Vilka förutsättningar ges för att uppnå organisatoriska mål?	Goals	To understand how the organization can provide support for achieving goals
In what way do you give support to meet the goals? På vilket sätt ger du stöd för medarbetare att uppfylla målen?	Goals	To understand how support can be given from leaders in order to reach set goal
How are your employees affected by difficult goals? <i>Motivated / unmotivated?</i> Hur tror du att dina medarbetare påverkas av svårt satta mål? <i>Motiverad / omotiverad?</i>	Goals	To understand the interlinktion between motivation and goals.
Do you believe that your employees have a strong belief in their ability to perform specific tasks? <i>Explain</i> Upplever du att dina medarbetare har en tro på sin egen förmåga att utföra specifika uppgifter?	Self-efficacy	To be able to examine the respondents self-efficacy since it is a main component of self-leadership
How do you give support to increase the belief in your own ability?	Self-efficacy	Examine relationship between self-efficacy and self-leadership from a leaders point of view

Hur ger du stöd till medarbetare för att öka tron på sin egen förmåga att självständigt utforma och styra sitt arbete?		
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Appendix 3 - Compilation of interviews

Respondent	Type of interview	Job Title	Date	Interview length
Leader A	Video Call	CFO in a forest industry	28/4-2021	44 min
Leader B	Video Call	CEO in a technician and innovation organisation	29/4-2021	62 min
Leader C	Video Call	Consultant Manager	3/5-2021	57 min
Leader D	Video Call	Property manager	4/5-2021	45 min
Employee A	Video Call	Service contract administrator in the vehicle industry	20/4-2021	45min
Employee B	Video Call	University lecturer	21/4-2021	31 min
Employee C	Phone Interview	Audit associate in financial consulting	21/4-2021	31 min
Employee D	Phone Interview	Educational support in vocational education	22/4-2021	30 min
Employee E	Video Call	School motivator and project manager in entrepreneurship	27/4-2021	33 min



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